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General Assembly
Sixty-seventh session

Official Records

6th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 25 September 2012, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

The meeting was called to order at 9.10 a.m.

Agenda item 106

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/67/1)

The President: In accordance with the decision taken at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 21 September 2012, the General Assembly will hear a presentation by the Secretary-General of his annual report on the work of the Organization, under agenda item 106. I give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: We gather annually in this great Hall to look soberly and without illusion at the state of our world. This year, I am here to sound the alarm about our direction as a human family. We can all see widespread insecurity and injustice, inequality and intolerance. I see Governments wasting vast and precious funds on deadly weapons while reducing investments in people. The severe and growing impacts of climate change are there before our eyes, yet too many people in power seem willfully blind to the threat.

This is a time of turmoil, transition and transformation — a time when time itself is not on our side. People want jobs and the prospect of a decent life. All too often, what they get instead is divisiveness, delay and denial of their dreams and aspirations.

We need look no farther than this room to see expressions of the thirst for progress. A large number of representatives are here for the first time — new leaders, installed by new voices, and expected to make decisive breaks with the past. Their people want to see results in real time, now, not the distant future.

The United Nations rightly faces the same scrutiny, the same impatience, the same demands for accountability. People do not look to the Organization to be simply a mirror reflecting back a divided world. People want progress and solutions today. They want ideas, Members' leadership and concrete hope for the future. Our duty is to respond to those frustrations and yearnings.

My action agenda highlights the five imperatives I set out in January this year: sustainable development, prevention, building a more secure world, helping countries in transition and empowering women and youth. I take heart from important steps forward on some of those fronts. Extreme poverty has been cut in half since the 2000. Democratic transitions are under way in the Arab world, Myanmar and many other countries. Africa's economic growth has become the fastest in the world. Asia and Latin America are making important advances. Still, we must raise our levels of ambition. We need more from each and every one here. The world needs more from our United Nations.

(*spoke in French*)

Sustainable development is the key to our hopes for the future. It is my top priority as Secretary-General, yet poverty and inequality remain rampant. Our use of natural resources is pushing the planet to the limit of what it can sustain. Certain ecosystems are reaching their breaking point. According to the best scientists in the world, we must change course before we discover that it is too late.

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Yesterday, the President of the World Bank and I announced that the Sustainable Energy for All initiative is ready to deliver tens of billions of dollars for projects to enable access to energy and energy efficiency. Tomorrow, I will launch a new initiative, called Education First. On Thursday, we will announce major additional support for the Scaling Up Nutrition initiative. In the past two years, the 260 partners of the Every Woman, Every Child initiative have disbursed $10 billion dollards in additional funds. We are proving, on the ground, that well-constructed partnerships can and are delivering results that none of us would be able to deliver alone.

The deadline for the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) is little more than three years away. We must redouble our efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. The economic crisis cannot serve as an excuse to default on our commitment to the basic needs of all human beings.

Even if we achieve the MDGs, there will still be much to do. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development pointed the way, notably towards the adoption of sustainable development goals. Those new goals and the post-2015 development agenda will guide our work for years to come. The MDGs sparked a remarkable global mobilization. These new frameworks must do the same: speaking to and inspiring people across the world.

(*spoke in English*)

Action on climate change remains a major piece of unfinished business. Last December at Durban, Member States agreed to reach a legally binding agreement by 2015. Now, they must make good on that promise. Time is running out on our ability to limit the rise in global temperature to 2°C. Changing course will not be easy, but to see this as only a burden misses the bigger picture. Sustainability and the green economy offer compelling opportunities to promote jobs, growth, innovation and long-term stability. The future we want can be ours, if we act now.

Just as there can be no peace without development, there can be no development without peace. I am profoundly concerned about continued violence in Afghanistan and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I urge the Sudan and South Sudan to resolve all remaining post-secession issues.

Somalia has made courageous advances, and Libya has held its first free elections in half a century.

Gains must be nurtured and sustained. We must keep our focus on preventing conflicts before they erupt, and on settling disputes through peaceful means.

Myamnar's leaders have shown courage and determination in moving along the path of democracy and reconciliation. The country still faces many challenges, from economic reform to the protection of ethnic minorities. As the Government and citizenry work together to meet those responsibilities, the international community and the United Nations must provide the strongest possible support.

The crisis in the Sahel is not getting sufficient attention and support. Poverty, fragility, drought and sectarian tensions are threats to stability across the region. Unconstitutional changes of Government have taken place all too frequently. Extremism is on the rise. Arms are easy to obtain, while jobs are hard to find.

The international community needs a major concerted effort to address that alarming situation. Tomorrow, I will outline our ideas for an integrated strategy.

Governments and organizations in the region, as well as international partners, will work out the details in the coming weeks. I urge Member States to engage and provide strong assistance.

The situation in the Sahel highlights the need to strengthen early warning for development. Sensors and seismographs across the world help us prepare for natural disasters. We must do more to detect the tremors of distress facing the poorest and most vulnerable.

We must also focus greater attention on food security and nutritional resilience. For millions of people, frequent shocks are the new norm. Food prices are increasingly volatile, provoking public anxiety, panic buying and civil unrest. We need to bolster safety nets. We must ramp up investments in sustainable agriculture, particularly for smallholder farmers. Governments must not impose trade restrictions on grains or other agricultural products. That reduces food supplies and discourages farmers from growing more. Together, we can avoid the food crises we have seen in recent years and achieve our goal of zero hunger.

The situation in Syria grows worse by the day. The crisis is no longer limited to Syria; it is a regional calamity with global ramifications. It is a serious and growing threat to international peace and security that requires Security Council action. I call on the

international community, especially the members of the Security Council and countries in the region, to solidly and concretely support the efforts of Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi. We must stop the violence and flows of arms to both sides and set in motion a Syrian-led transition as soon as possible.

Humanitarian needs are escalating in and beyond Syria. The international community should not look the other way as violence spirals out of control. Brutal human rights abuses continue to be committed, mainly by the Government but also by opposition groups. Such crimes must not go unpunished. There is no statute of limitations for such extreme violence. It is the duty of our generation to put an end to impunity for international crimes, in Syria and elsewhere. It is our duty to give tangible meaning to the responsibility to protect.

The winds of change in the Arab world and elsewhere will continue to blow. After decades of harsh occupation and humiliating restrictions in almost every aspect of their lives, the Palestinians must be able to realize their right to a viable State of their own. Israel must be able to live in peace and security, free from threats and rockets. The two-State solution is the only sustainable option, yet the door may be closing for good. The continued growth of Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory seriously undermines efforts towards peace. We must break that dangerous impasse.

I also reject both the language of delegitimization and threats of potential military action by one State against another. Any such attacks would be devastating. The shrill war talk of recent weeks has been alarming, and should remind us of the need for peaceful solutions and for full respect for the Charter and international law. Leaders have a responsibility to use their voices to lower tensions, instead of raising the temperature and volatility of the moment.

Building a more secure world also means pursuing our goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. As long as such weapons exist, we are all at risk. I look forward to a successful conference later this year on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction.

Iran must prove its intentions for its programme are entirely peaceful. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea must move towards the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. All relevant Security Council resolutions should be implemented in full and without delay.

We shall have neither peace nor development without respect for human rights and the rule of law. The empowerment of women, the protection of children, and the treaties and declarations that have extended the umbrella of protection are our touchstones. Yesterday's High-level Meeting on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels sent a strong message about the importance of international law, justice and institutions within and among nations.

Over the past two weeks a disgraceful act of great insensitivity has led to justifiable offence and unjustifiable violence. Freedom of speech and assembly are fundamental, but neither of those freedoms is a license to incite or commit violence. Yet we live in a world where, too often, divisions are exploited for short-term political gain. Too many people are ready to take small flames of difference and turn them into a bonfire. Too many people are tolerant of intolerance. The moderate majority should not be a silent majority. It must empower itself and say to bigots and extremists alike: "you do not speak for us". Responsible political and community leaders must step up at this time.

(*spoke in French*)

With so much at stake, the United Nations must continue to renew itself. We must deliver as one, cooperate across disciplines, structures and duty stations. We are building a global Secretariat capable of supporting our global presence, thanks to shared services, integrated approaches and innovative uses of technology. Staff mobility is a crucial first step. An initiative of that nature is long overdue. We will be making a proposal on that subject in the weeks ahead, and we will need the Assembly's support.

Let us work together for a streamlined budget process built on trust. Micromanagement serves no one — not Member States wanting quick results and not the representatives of the Secretariat, who share the Assembly's desire for excellence. As Secretary-General I should have enough room to manage in a dynamic environment.

Let us also prepare ourselves to fully take advantage of the power of partnerships in all fields.

I will shortly be offering specific proposals for strengthening our partnership capacity. That will allow us to deliver more and better results, to enhance accountability and to improve coherence. The support of Member States will be essential if we are to meet the many important mandates that they entrust to the United Nations.

A strengthened United Nations will be pivotal to all that we hope to achieve for the peoples of the world. Let us prove that the United Nations is able to reform itself and change with the times.

(*spoke in English*)

I have always put people first and challenges at the centre. We have worked together to find solutions to the problems that matter to people day by day and that keep them up at night.

World leaders hold in their hands the powers of the State and the levers of Government. Their people expect them to listen to their aspirations and to unleash their energies and ideas. The world expects them to work with one another for the common good.

No one can do everything. But if we are united, each of us, in our own way, can do something. Together, if we all uphold our collective responsibilities, we can meet today's tests, seize the opportunities of an era of dramatic change, and give new life to the principles and purposes of our founding Charter. I count on the strong leadership and commitment of those present today to make this world a better place for all.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his presentation.

Agenda item 8

General debate

The President: It is a great honour to stand before the Assembly as President at its sixty-seventh session. My candidature was put forth by a proud democratic country, which I have been greatly privileged to serve during two successive terms as Foreign Minister.

Like many other nations, mine has travelled through periods of tragedy and periods of glory. At the close of the twentieth century, a founding Member of the United Nations and a proud victor over fascism descended into ferocious internal strife. The ensuing devastation and fratricide left deep wounds in their wake. A painful era has now come to an end.

Today our nation stands with confidence before the world once again, less than two decades after having been left out of this Hall. We do so as a nation steadfastly determined to advance the common interests of mankind, committed to responsible global citizenship and dedicated to helping shape a world in which peace can triumph and international law prevail.

The General Assembly has been defined as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations. It is the most august body of sovereign States ever conceived by mankind and a grand pantheon of hope for the peoples of the world. Its founding compact, the United Nations Charter, was written so that every one of its Member States could observe the same rules and adhere to the same principles, established as a result of the historic victory over fascism. Its purpose was clear: to set up, for the first time in history, a workable international system that aspires to justice, pledging not only equal rights to all nations but also ensuring their equal dignity.

This is not a merely political organization, said the President of the General Assembly at its second session, Brazil's Oswaldo Aranha. It is not a simple covenant between nations, but an undertaking in human thought and sentiment. From here, he said, emanates a faith that the peoples of the Earth may learn to know and trust each other in the full understanding of a common destiny.

The geopolitical landscape of our time is unlike any the world has ever seen, one of truly global interdependence. We are beset by a series of ruptures that seem to be building in intensity. Their effects can barely be kept in check. The international system is becoming at once more volatile and more unpredictable. In my view, a number of distinct variables in the increasingly complex global equation require our heightened attention. Allow me to focus on three of the most important ones.

The first is across-the-board repositioning. A growing number of States are determined to enhance their external engagement, aspiring to play greater roles in their respective regions and beyond. As a result, power and influence in the international arena are becoming more diffuse.

Virtually no one's position is the same today as it was just a generation ago, making it more difficult for a meaningful and enduring consensus to be reached on significant items on our shared agenda.

Secondly, in our era, capabilities once thought to exclusively in the hands of States, such as the ability to inflict harm on a massive scale, could become more easily accessible to non-State actors. As the world becomes de facto smaller, countries have come to feel more exposed. We must find a way to act in concert, so that the legitimate needs and concerns of Member States can be adequately met.

A third variable in the new global equation is the quest for empowerment. Whatever the specifics of their circumstances and grievances, populations across the world seek to have a greater say in how their destiny will be shaped. Today this is perhaps most manifest in the Middle East. The Arab Spring advanced democratic aspirations in a number of countries; the fate of some others still hangs in the balance.

There are concerns, however, that the Arab Spring may generate a number of unintended consequences. These include the reawakening of sectarian loyalties and ethnic as well as tribal tensions, many of them long-suppressed. The legacy of the grand, noble quest of the peoples of the Middle East for empowerment hinges on how these and other dangers are going to be dealt with.

Given the region's global, political, economic and cultural significance, the unfolding events in that part of the world will have far-reaching implications for the entire planet.

Rarely has it been more necessary for the world to draw closer together. It is to that endeavour that I believe we should devote the full scope of our resources. That will require, however, that we turn once more to the first principles of the Charter of the United Nations. In so doing, we will be able to give renewed meaning to the original intent of our founders.

Those who drafted the Charter of the United Nations understood that when nations feel secure, they are much more likely to unclench their fists and give the process of peacefully settling disputes a genuine chance to succeed. In order to do so, it will be critically important to reinforce universal adherence to accepted principles and rules, implemented without partiality or favour. Lack of clarity or selective enforcement, on the other hand, can quickly erode the basis for trust. That can easily lead to a situation in which nothing more than lip service is paid to the principles, and the rules lose virtually all meaning.

Such a scenario is clearly not in the interest of the Organization. I believe that we must take decisive action to prevent it from ever coming to pass. I strongly believe that essential to such efforts is reinforcing respect for the equality, sovereignty and territorial integrity of United Nations States Members. That is indispensable to achieving the first stated purpose of the United Nations, namely, to maintain international peace and security.

The Charter of the United Nations enjoins the parties to any dispute to first of all seek a solution by, inter alia, negotiation, mediation, arbitration or judicial settlement. With that in mind, I have proposed the following theme for this year's general debate: "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means". In taking up that critical issue, let us not forget that peace is not merely the absence of war. It also necessitates the reconciliation of those who are at odds. Only by so doing can we ever hope to produce what a great New York philanthropist called, more than a century ago and not far from this building, "the enthronement of lasting peace, a victory without tears".

A solution to an international problem can be legitimately achieved only upon renunciation of unilateralism; it can become truly sustainable only when its provisions are willingly accepted and fulfilled in good faith. When parties commit to a settlement, I believe that the General Assembly, coming together in consensus, can act as a moral guarantor of what has been agreed.

I invite members to share their thoughts on the peaceful resolution of disputes — a fundamental task of the United Nations. I look forward to hearing the Assembly's concrete proposals on how the mechanisms that are in place can be better utilized, and to engage with members on incorporating new ideas into the overall efforts to revitalize the General Assembly.

Over the past several decades, our debates have been enriched by the views of civil society representatives. With notable exceptions, however, we have not yet found a way to draw upon the tremendous work done by the world's public policy institutes and think tanks. As President, I intend to launch a number of initiatives to harness their wisdom and experience.

I have also established a high-level informal advisory panel, composed of distinguished world statesmen, whose purpose will be to provide me with guidance and advice on the myriad issues that will be considered by the General Assembly.

In my view, sustainable development is one of the most important conflict prevention resources at our disposal. It is becoming increasingly prominent on the global peace and security agenda. That is in part due to the attention we have all devoted to the Millennium Development Goals. As President, I will work with Member States on bringing us closer to fulfilling that historic objective.

The General Assembly also needs to focus on the post-2015 agenda. What was agreed at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) will need to be implemented by this body. That includes preparations to launch a high-level forum, which should be convened at the beginning of the next session.

The General Assembly has also been mandated to establish a working group to propose a list of sustainable development goals for consideration and adoption by the plenary. As President, I will encourage that process, which should involve strengthening a number of existing United Nations funds and programmes, including the United Nations Environment Programme.

It is difficult to imagine the Rio+20 agenda becoming truly effective without the mobilization of additional resources. In accordance with the mandate given to the General Assembly in Rio de Janeiro, I will work to establish an intergovernmental process, under the framework of this body, to propose options on an effective financing strategy. I believe that moving forward in the bold undertaking envisaged by the Rio+20 Conference not only complements, but will decisively reinforce all other efforts to strengthen international peace and security.

To be successful, I believe that the General Assembly should further engage in the global development discourse. Greater emphasis ought to be placed on key economic issues such as growth, job creation, the production of new green goods and services and a more equitable trading environment. It is fortunate that the Charter tasks the United Nations with achieving cooperation in solving international economic problems.

Sovereign equality loses much of its meaning if it is understood solely as a political principle, downplaying the economic dimension. Each in its own way, the Group of Eight, the Group of 20 (G-20), World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and others play critical roles. However, I strongly believe that the General Assembly should participate more actively in advancing the global economic governance agenda.

During the sixty-third session, we endorsed the outcome document of the Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development (resolution 63/303, annex). It proposed increasing cooperation, coordination, coherence and exchanges, both in terms of policies and actions between the United Nations and international financial institutions as well as relevant regional organizations.

The material destiny of our planet must be determined in a more inclusive fashion. No country can lift itself out of poverty if it has no right to have its voice heard. That is why, as President, I intend to convene an informal, high-level meeting over the course of the current session. Its aim would be the establishment, in the next few years, of a consultation framework for effective collaboration among the General Assembly and international financial and trade institutions, as well as groupings such as the G-20.

Another conflict prevention resource I believe is underutilized is the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations. Established as a soft-power tool of preventative diplomacy, it seeks to overcome differences and tensions within and among different cultures, faiths and societies, all the while guarding against the erasing hand of uniformity that some fear could be a consequence of globalization.

We all sense the growing danger of what the ills and grievances of past centuries can inflict upon us, if they continue to be reawakened. Guided by the General Assembly, the Alliance could help the world expunge the venoms of its divisive past more effectively. I believe that enlarging the common denominator of values and principles that bind us to each other truly serves the cause of peace. As President, I will work closely with the Alliance on ways to put our diverse identities more constructively in its service. That would help us ensure the future is no longer adversely affected by exclusionary historical narratives.

As has been the case since its founding, the United Nations will be only as strong as the Member States choose to make it.

As Ralph Waldo Emerson once famously said, an institution is the lengthened shadow of man. In this era of transformation, I believe that strengthening our collective faith in the approach that only this Organization can legitimately provide is the safest

course for navigating away from the many rocks and shoals in the path of establishing a genuine global partnership for the twenty-first century.

One of the earliest advocates of the peaceful settlement of disputes was Cicero, who famously expressed the longing "*Cedant arma togae*" — that arms might yield to law. From the days of the ancients to our own times, generations of valiant men and women have tirelessly endeavoured to advance that noble cause. The culmination of those great efforts is the United Nations Charter — our surest guide in this time of consequence.

Let us bring to bear on the problems that we face a renewed spirit of cooperation, a tenacity of purpose and a will to overcome differences. Let us find the courage to master the many challenges ahead and, in so doing, work to assert the pre-eminence of justice. Let us have faith in our ability to come together in the full understanding of our common destiny so that this Assembly may go down in history as an Assembly of peace.

Before giving the floor to the first speaker for this morning, I would like to remind members that the list of speakers for the general debate has been established on the agreed basis that statements should be no longer than 15 minutes, to enable all speakers to be heard at a given meeting. I would like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statements, within that time frame, at a moderate speed so that interpretation into the six official United Nations languages may be provided properly.

I would also like to draw attention to the decision taken by the General Assembly at previous sessions, namely, that the practice of expressing congratulations inside the Hall after a speech has been delivered is strongly discouraged. In that connection, after delivering their statements, speakers are invited to exit the Hall through Room GA-200, located behind the podium, before returning to their seats.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to proceed in the same manner during the general debate of the sixty-seventh session?

It was so decided.

The President: Finally, I should like to draw the attention of members to the fact that during the general debate, official photographs of all speakers are taken by the Department of Public Information. Members interested in obtaining those photographs are requested to contact the Photo Library of the United Nations.

Address by Ms. Dilma Rousseff, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil.

Ms. Dilma Rousseff, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Dilma Rousseff, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Rousseff (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): Once again, a woman's voice is opening the general debate of the General Assembly. For many, we women are "half the sky". However, we wish to be half the Earth as well, with equal rights and opportunities, free from all forms of discrimination and violence, capable of building our own emancipation and, with it, of contributing to the full empowerment of all.

A year after my statement at this same rostrum (see A/66/PV.11), I note that many of the problems that already troubled us in September 2011 remain. Today, I want to again consider a few of those issues, whose solutions are becoming increasingly urgent.

The grave economic crisis that began in 2008 has taken on new and worrisome aspects. Opting for orthodox fiscal policies has been exacerbating the recession in developed economies, with repercussions for us as emerging countries, including Brazil. The main leaders of the developed world have not yet found the path that combines appropriate fiscal adjustment with measures to stimulate investment and demand, which are indispensable to halt the recession and ensure economic growth.

Monetary policies cannot be the only response to the growing unemployment, the increase in poverty and the dismay that affects the most vulnerable sectors of the population throughout the world. The central banks of developed countries continue to pursue expansionist monetary policies, which causes an imbalance in exchange rates. The resulting artificial appreciation

of emerging countries' currencies causes them to lose market space, which further exacerbates the global recession.

We cannot accept the legitimate trade protection initiatives of developing countries being unfairly classified as protectionism. We must remember that legitimate trade protection measures are in accordance with the rules of the World Trade Organization. We should fight protectionism and all forms of trade manipulation, since they create greater competitiveness in a spurious and fraudulent way.

There can be no effective response to the crisis without strengthening cooperation efforts among countries and multilateral bodies, such as the Group of Twenty, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Such cooperation must seek to reshape the relationship between fiscal and monetary policies in order to prevent the recession from worsening, to control the currency war and to again stimulate global demand.

We know from our own experience that the national debt of States and bank and financial debts will not be addressed in the context of a recession. On the contrary, recession only exacerbates such problems. It is urgent that we establish a comprehensive agreement for the coordinated resumption of global economic growth in order to prevent the despair caused by unemployment and a lack of opportunities.

My country has been doing its part. In recent years, we have pursued prudent economic policies, accumulated significant foreign exchange reserves, strongly reduced public debt and, with innovative social policies, lifted 40 million Brazilians out of poverty, thereby strengthening a large domestic market.

Like all countries, we were affected by the crisis. However, despite the temporary slowing in our growth rate, we have managed to maintain extremely high employment levels and to continue to reduce social inequality while significantly increasing workers' income levels. We have overcome the incorrect view according to which measures to stimulate growth are incompatible with austerity plans. That is a false dilemma. Fiscal responsibility is as necessary as growth measures are indispensable, because fiscal consolidation can be sustainable only in a context of economic recovery.

History reveals that austerity, when exaggerated and isolated from growth, is self-defeating. Brazil has chosen to face both of those challenges simultaneously. While exerting strict control over public spending, we have increased our investments in infrastructure and education. While controlling inflation, we have acted vigorously through policies aimed at social inclusion and poverty eradication. Furthermore, while carrying out structural reforms in the financial and welfare areas, we have reduced the tax burden and the cost of energy, and we have invested in infrastructure and knowledge to generate science, technology and innovation.

There are moments in which we cannot choose between one alternative or the other. Both must be developed separately at the same time.

Just as in 2011, the Middle East and North Africa continue to be at the center of the attention of the international community. Important social movements, with different political orientations, have swept away despotic regimes and brought about transition processes whose meaning and direction still cannot be clearly discerned. However, it is not difficult to identify in almost all those movements a cry of protest against poverty, unemployment and the lack of opportunities and civil rights imposed by authoritarian governments on large sectors of those societies, especially young people. Nor is it difficult to find in those events the traces of historical grievances caused by decades of colonial or neocolonial policies carried out in the name of a supposedly civilizing agenda. Little by little, the economic interests behind those policies became clear.

Today, we are witnessing with consternation the unfolding of the dire situation in Syria. Brazil condemns in the strongest terms the violence that continues to claim lives in that country. Syria is witnessing a large-scale humanitarian tragedy on its territory and in that of its neighbors. The Government in Damascus bears the largest share of responsibility for the cycle of violence that has victimized a large number of civilians, especially women, children and young people. However, we are also aware of the responsibilities of armed opposition groups, especially those that increasingly rely on foreign military and logistical support.

As President of a country that is home to millions of people of Syrian descent, I call on the parties to the conflict to lay down their weapons and join the mediation efforts being undertaken by the joint United Nations-Arab League special envoy. There is no military solution to the Syrian crisis. Diplomacy and

dialogue are not simply our best option; they are the only option.

As President of a country where thousands and thousands of Brazilian Muslims live, I declare here today our vehement repudiation of the escalation of Islamophobic prejudice in Western countries. Brazil is one of the players in the generous Alliance of Civilizations initiative originally launched by the Turkish Government.

With the same vehemence, we repudiate the terrorist acts that took the lives of American diplomats in Libya.

With our eyes still set upon the Middle East, where some of the most important challenges to international peace and security lie, I wish to once more touch upon the Israeli-Palestinian question. I reiterate my words of 2011, when I expressed the Brazilian Government's support for the recognition of the Palestinian State as a full Member of the United Nations. I added then, and I repeat today, that only a free and sovereign Palestine will be able to fulfil Israel's legitimate desires for peace with its neighbours, security in its borders and regional political stability.

The international community has encountered growing difficulty in dealing with the exacerbation of regional conflicts. That is clear from the stalemates within the Security Council. It is one of the gravest problems that we face. The crisis that began in 2008 demonstrated the need for reform of the mechanisms of global economic governance. In point of fact, to this day we have still not fully implemented such reforms. Increasingly intense regional wars and conflicts, the tragic loss of human lives and the immense material losses for the peoples involved all demonstrate the utmost urgency of undertaking the institutional reform of the United Nations, in particular of its Security Council.

We cannot allow the Council to be replaced, as has been the case, by coalitions that are formed without its consent, beyond its control and without due regard for international law. The use of force without authorization by the Council is clearly illegal, yet it is beginning to be regarded in some quarters as an acceptable option. It is by no means acceptable. The ease with which some resort to that kind of action results from the stalemates that paralyse the Council. Because of that, the Council must urgently be reformed.

Brazil will always fight to ensure that decisions emanating from the United Nations prevail. But we want legitimate actions, founded on international legality. In this spirit, I have defended the need for "responsibility while protecting" as a necessary complement to the responsibility to protect.

Multilateralism is stronger today after the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development — Rio+20. Together, during those days in June, we held the largest and most participative conference in the history of the United Nations. We were able to take firm steps towards the historic consolidation of a new paradigm: to grow, to include, to protect and to preserve — that is, sustainable development. I thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Ambassador Sha Zukang for their efforts and their close collaboration with Brazil, before and throughout the Conference.

The outcome document that we approved by consensus in Rio (resolution 66/288, annex) not only preserves the legacy of 1992 but also sets the starting point for a sustainable development agenda for the twenty-first century, with a focus on the eradication of poverty, on the conscientious use of natural resources and on sustainable patterns of production and consumption.

The United Nations has before it a number of tasks mandated by the Rio Conference. In particular, I would like to make reference to the definition of the sustainable development goals. Rio+20 shone a powerful light on the future we want. We have an obligation to heed the many warnings being sounded by science and society. We must consider climate change one of the main challenges to present and future generations. The Brazilian Government is firmly committed to the targets for controlling greenhouse gas emissions and to the unrelenting fight against deforestation in the Amazon rainforest.

In 2009, we voluntarily took on commitments and adopted them as laws. Those targets are particularly ambitious for a developing country, which must deal with pressing demands of all types in order to promote the well-being of its population. We hope that those countries that bear a greater historical responsibility for climate change and that have greater means with which to deal with it will fulfil their obligations to the international community.

Another United Nations initiative we commend is the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020. Brazil is engaged in efforts to protect lives and reduce road accidents, one of the main causes of death among young people of the world. To that end, our Government is developing a wide-ranging awareness-raising campaign together with the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile.

In a context of environmental challenges, economic crises and threats to peace in different parts of the world, Brazil continues committed to working with its neighbours to build an environment of democracy, peace, prosperity and social justice. We have made great progress in integrating the Latin American and Caribbean region as a priority for international cooperation.

Our region is a good example for the world. The rule of law that we have achieved by overcoming authoritarian regimes is being preserved and strengthened. Democracy is not a heritage immune to attacks. In order to avoid setbacks, the Southern Common Market and the Union of South American Nations have been firm when they had to be, because we consider integration and democracy to be inseparable principles. I also reaffirm our commitment to keeping our region free from weapons of mass destruction. In that regard, I wish to recall the existence of immense arsenals that, in addition to threatening all humankind, aggravate tensions and hamper efforts towards peace. The world clamours for food instead of weapons, for the billions of men, women and children who suffer from the cruelest punishment inflicted on humanity: hunger.

Finally, I wish to refer to a brother country, beloved by all Latin Americans and Caribbeans — Cuba. Cuba has made great progress in bringing its economic model up to date. To continue on its path, it needs the support of partners both near and far. Cooperation on Cuba's progress is, however, hampered by the economic embargo that has plagued its population for decades. The time has long since passed for us to put an end to that anachronism, which is condemned by the immense majority of Members of the United Nations.

This year, we watched the Olympic and Paralympic Games brilliantly organized by the United Kingdom. With the closing of the London Olympic Games, Brazil has begun the countdown towards the Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games in 2016, which will be preceded by the 2014 World Cup. Every two years, during the Summer and Winter Games, humanity seems to reawaken to values that should inspire us permanently: tolerance, respect for differences, equality, inclusion, friendship and understanding. Those principles are also the foundation of human rights and of this Organization. At the opening of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, I propose to all the nations represented here that they let the ideals of the Olympic flame shine upon them.

Strengthening the United Nations is necessary at this stage when multipolarity opens a historic new perspective. We must work towards that end. We must work to ensure that in the multipolarity that is coming to prevail, cooperation predominates over conflict, dialogue overcomes threats and negotiated solutions are reached before and forestall interventions involving the use of force. I reiterate that in this necessarily collective effort, which presupposes the quest for consensus, the United Nations has a key role to play, particularly as the Organization and its various bodies become more representative and more legitimate and therefore more effective.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly I wish to thank the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Dilma Rousseff, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Barack Obama, President of the United States of America

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the United States of America.

Mr. Barack Obama, President of the United States of America, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Barack Obama, President of the United States of America, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Obama: I would like to begin today by telling the Assembly about an American named Chris Stevens. Chris was born in a town called Grass Valley, California, the son of a lawyer and a musician. As a young man, Chris joined the Peace Corps and taught

English in Morocco, and he came to love and respect the people of North Africa and the Middle East. He would carry that commitment throughout his life.

As a diplomat, he worked from Egypt to Syria, from Saudia Arabia to Libya. He was known for walking the streets of the cities where he worked, tasting the local food, meeting as many people as he could, speaking Arabic, listening with a broad smile. Chris went to Benghazi, arriving on a cargo ship, in the early days of the Libyan revolution. As America's representative, he helped the Libyan people as they coped with violent conflict, cared for the wounded and crafted a vision for the future in which the rights of all Libyans would be respected. After the revolution, he supported the birth of a new democracy as Libyans held elections and built new institutions and began to move forward after decades of dictatorship.

Chris Stevens loved his work. He took pride in the country he served, and he saw dignity in the people that he met.

Two weeks ago, he travelled to Benghazi to review plans to establish a new cultural center and modernize a hospital. That is when America's compound came under attack. Along with three of his colleagues, Chris was killed in the city that he had helped to save. He was 52 years old.

I tell this story because Chris Stevens embodied the best of America. Like his fellow Foreign Service officers, he built bridges across oceans and cultures and was deeply invested in the international cooperation that the United Nations represents. He acted with humility, but he also stood up for a set of principles, a belief that individuals should be free to determine their own destiny and live with liberty, dignity, justice and opportunity.

The attacks on the American civilians in Benghazi were attacks on America. We are grateful for the assistance we received from the Libyan Government and from the Libyan people. There should be no doubt that we will be relentless in tracking down the killers and bringing them to justice. I also appreciate that, in recent days, the leaders of other countries in the region — including Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen — have taken steps to secure our diplomatic facilities and called for calm. So have religious authorities around the globe.

But it should be understood that the attacks of the last two weeks are not simply an assault on America. They are also an assault on the very ideals upon which the United Nations was founded — the notion that people can resolve their differences peacefully; that diplomacy can take the place of war, and that, in an interdependent world, all of us have a stake in working towards greater opportunity and security for our citizens.

If we are serious about upholding those ideals, it will not be enough to put more guards in front of an Embassy or to put out statements of regret and wait for the outrage to pass. If we are serious about those ideals, we must speak honestly about the deeper causes of the crisis, because we face a choice between the forces that would drive us apart and the hopes we hold in common.

Today, we must affirm that our future will be determined by people like Chris Stevens, and not by his killers. Today, we must declare that such violence and intolerance has no place among our United Nations.

It has been less than two years since a vendor in Tunisia set himself on fire to protest the oppressive corruption in his country and sparked what became known as the Arab Spring. Since then, the world has been captivated by the transformation that has taken place, and the United States has supported the forces of change.

We were inspired by the Tunisian protests that toppled a dictator, because we recognized our own beliefs in the aspirations of the men and women who took to the streets.

We supported change in Egypt, because our support for democracy ultimately put us on the side of the people.

We welcomed a transition of leadership in Yemen, because the interests of the people were no longer being served by a corrupt status quo.

We intervened in Libya alongside a broad coalition and with the mandate of the United Nations Security Council, because we had the ability to stop the slaughter of innocents and because we believed that the aspirations of the people were more powerful than a tyrant.

And as we meet here, we again declare that the regime of Bashar Al-Assad must come to an end, so that the suffering of the Syrian people can stop and a new dawn can begin.

We have taken those positions because we believe that freedom and self-determination are not unique to

one culture. Those values are not simply American values or Western values — they are universal values. And even as there will be huge challenges that come with a transition to democracy, I am convinced that, ultimately, Government of the people, by the people and for the people is more likely to bring about the stability, prosperity and individual opportunity that serve as the basis for peace in our world.

So, let us remember that this is a season of progress. For the first time in decades, Tunisians, Egyptians and Libyans voted for new leaders in elections that were credible, competitive and fair. That democratic spirit has not been restricted to the Arab world. Over the past year, we have seen peaceful transitions of power in Malawi and Senegal and a new President in Somalia. In Burma, a President has freed political prisoners and opened a closed society, a courageous dissident has been elected to Parliament, and people look forward to further reform. Around the globe, people are making their voices heard, insisting on their innate dignity and the right to determine their future.

And yet the turmoil of recent weeks reminds us that the path to democracy does not end with the casting of a ballot. Nelson Mandela once said, "To be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others". True democracy demands that citizens cannot be thrown in jail because of what they believe and that businesses can be opened without paying a bribe. It depends on the freedom of citizens to speak their minds and assemble without fear and on the rule of law and due process, which guarantee the rights of all people.

In other words, true democracy — real freedom — is hard work. Those in power have to resist the temptation to crack down on dissidents. In hard economic times, countries may be tempted to rally the people around perceived enemies at home and abroad, rather than focusing on the painstaking work of reform.

Moreover, there will always be those who reject human progress — dictators who cling to power, corrupt interests that depend upon the status quo, and extremists who fan the flames of hate and division. From Northern Ireland to South Asia, from Africa to the Americas, from the Balkans to the Pacific Rim, we have witnessed convulsions that can accompany transitions to a new political order. At times, the conflicts arise along the fault lines of race or tribe, and often they arise from the difficulties of reconciling tradition and faith with the diversity and interdependence of the modern world.

In every country, there are those who find different religious beliefs threatening; in every culture, those who love freedom for themselves must ask themselves how much they are willing to tolerate freedom for others. That is what we saw play out in the last two weeks, as a crude and disgusting video sparked outrage throughout the Muslim world. Now, I have made it clear that the United States Government had nothing to do with that video, and I believe its message must be rejected by all who respect our common humanity. It is an insult not only to Muslims, but to America as well, for as the city outside these walls makes clear, we are a country that has welcomed people of every race and every faith. We are home to Muslims, who worship across our country. We not only respect the freedom of religion, we have laws that protect individuals from being harmed because of how they look or what they believe. We understand why people take offence at that video, because millions of our citizens are among those people.

I know there are some who ask why we do not just ban such a video. And the answer is enshrined in our laws; our Constitution protects the right to practice free speech. Here in the United States, countless publications provoke offence. Like me, the majority of Americans are Christian, and yet we do not ban blasphemy against our most sacred beliefs. As President of our country and Commander-in-Chief of our military, I accept that people are going to call me awful things every day, and I will always defend their right to do so.

Americans have fought and died around the globe to protect the right of all people to express their views, even views that we profoundly disagree with. We do not do so because we support hateful speech, but because our founders understood that without such protections, the capacity of individuals to express their own views and practise their own faith may be threatened. We do so because in a diverse society, efforts to restrict speech can quickly become a tool to silence critics and oppress minorities. We do so because, given the power of faith in our lives and the passion that religious differences can inflame, the strongest weapon against hateful speech is not repression; it is more speech — the voices of tolerance that rally against bigotry and blasphemy, and lift up the values of understanding and mutual respect.

I know that not all countries in this body share that particular understanding of the protection of free speech. We recognize that. But in 2012, at a time when anyone with a cell phone can spread offensive views around the world with the click of a button, the notion that we can control the flow of information is obsolete. The question then is how do we respond? And on this we must agree: there is no speech that justifies mindless violence. There are no words that excuse the killing of innocents. There is no video that justifies an attack on an embassy. There is no slander that provides an excuse for people to burn a restaurant in Lebanon, or destroy a school in Tunis, or cause death and destruction in Pakistan. In our modern world with modern technologies, for us to respond in that way to hateful speech empowers any individual who engages in such speech to create chaos around the world. We empower the worst of us if that is how we respond.

More broadly, the events of the past two weeks also speak to the need for all of us to honestly address the tensions between the West and the Arab world, which is moving towards democracy. Now, let me be clear: just as we cannot solve every problem in the world, the United States has not and will not seek to dictate the outcome of democratic transitions abroad. We do not expect other nations to agree with us on every issue, nor do we assume that the violence of the past weeks or the hateful speech of some individuals represents the views of the overwhelming majority of Muslims, any more than the views of the people who produced that video represent those of Americans.

However, I do believe that it is the obligation of all leaders in all countries to speak out forcefully against violence and extremism. It is time to marginalize those who, even when not directly resorting to violence, use hatred of America, or the West, or Israel, as the central organizing principle of politics. For that only gives cover, and sometimes provides an excuse, for those who do resort to violence.

That brand of politics, one that pits East against West, and South against North, Muslims against Christians and Hindus and Jews, cannot deliver on the promise of freedom. To young people, it offers only false hope. Burning an American flag does nothing to provide a child with an education. Smashing apart a restaurant does not fill an empty stomach. Attacking an embassy will not create a single job. That brand of politics only makes it harder to achieve what we must do together, namely, to educate our children and create the opportunities that they deserve; protect human rights and extend democracy's promise.

It should be understood that America will never retreat from the world. We will bring to justice those who harm our citizens and our friends, and we will stand with our allies. We are willing to partner with countries around the world to deepen ties of trade and investment, science and technology, energy and development — all efforts that can spark economic growth for all our peoples and stabilize democratic change.

But such efforts depend on a spirit of mutual interest and mutual respect. No Government or company, no school or non-governmental organization will be confident working in a country where its people are endangered. For partnerships to be effective, our citizens must be secure and our efforts must be welcomed. A politics based only on anger — one based on dividing the world between us and them — not only sets back international cooperation, it ultimately undermines those who tolerate it. All of us have an interest in standing up to those forces.

Let us remember that Muslims have suffered the most at the hands of extremism. On the same day that our civilians were killed in Benghazi, a Turkish police officer was murdered in Istanbul only days before his wedding; more than 10 Yemenis were killed in a car bomb in Sana'a; several Afghan children were mourned by their parents just days after they were killed by a suicide bomber in Kabul. The impulse towards intolerance and violence may initially be focused on the West, but over time it cannot be contained. The same impulses towards extremism are used to justify war between Sunni and Shia, between tribes and clans. It leads not to strength and prosperity but to chaos. In less than two years, we have seen largely peaceful protests bring more change to Muslim-majority countries than a decade of violence. And extremists understand this. Because they have nothing to offer to improve the lives of people, violence is their only way to stay relevant. They do not build; they only destroy.

It is time to leave the call to violence and the politics of division behind. On so many issues, we face a choice between the promise of the future or the prisons of the past. And we cannot afford to get it wrong. We must seize this moment. And America stands ready to work with all who are willing to embrace a better future. The future must not belong to those who target Coptic

Christians in Egypt; it must be claimed by those in Tahrir Square who chanted, "Muslims, Christians, we are one." The future must not belong to those who bully women; it must be shaped by girls who go to school, and those who stand for a world where our daughters can live their dreams just like our sons.

The future must not belong to those corrupt few who steal a country's resources; it must be won by the students and entrepreneurs, the workers and business owners who seek a broader prosperity for all people. Those are the women and men that America stands with; theirs is the vision we will support.

The future must not belong to those who slander the Prophet of Islam. But to be credible, those who condemn that slander must also condemn the hate we see in the images of Jesus Christ that are desecrated, or churches that are destroyed, or the Holocaust that is denied.

Let us condemn incitement against Sufi Muslims and Shia pilgrims. It is time to heed the words of Gandhi: "Intolerance is itself a form of violence and an obstacle to the growth of a true democratic spirit". Together we must work towards a world where we are strengthened by our differences, not defined by them. That is what America embodies; that is the vision that we will support.

Among Israelis and Palestinians, the future must not belong to those who turn their backs on the prospect of peace. Let us leave behind those who thrive on conflict, those who reject the right of Israel to exist. The road is hard, but the destination is clear: a secure, Jewish State of Israel and an independent, prosperous Palestine. Understanding that such a peace must come through a just agreement between the parties, America will walk alongside all who are prepared to make that journey.

In Syria, the future must not belong to a dictator who massacres his people. If there is a cause that cries out for protest in the world today, peaceful protest, it is a regime that tortures children and shoots rockets at apartment buildings. We must remain engaged to ensure that what began with citizens demanding their rights does not end in a cycle of sectarian violence.

Together, we must stand with those Syrians who believe in a different vision: a Syria that is united and inclusive, where children do not need to fear their own Government and all Syrians have a say in how they are governed, Sunnis and Alawites, Kurds and Christians. That is what America stands for. That is the outcome that we will work for, with sanctions and consequences for those who persecute, and assistance and support for those who work for this common good, because we believe that the Syrians who embrace this vision will have the strength and the legitimacy to lead.

In Iran, we see where the path of a violent and unaccountable ideology leads. The Iranian people have a remarkable and ancient history, and many Iranians wish to enjoy peace and prosperity alongside their neighbours. But just as it restricts the rights of its own people, the Iranian Government continues to prop up a dictator in Damascus and supports terrorist groups abroad. Time and again, it has failed to take the opportunity to demonstrate that its nuclear programme is peaceful and to meet its obligations to the United Nations.

So let me be clear. America wants to resolve this issue through diplomacy, and we believe that there is still time and space to do so. But that time is not unlimited. We respect the right of nations to access peaceful nuclear power, but one of the purposes of the United Nations is to see that we harness that power for peace. Make no mistake: a nuclear-armed Iran is not a challenge that can be contained. It would threaten the elimination of Israel, the security of Gulf nations and the stability of the global economy. It risks triggering a nuclear-arms race in the region and the unravelling of the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. That is why a coalition of countries is holding the Iranian Government accountable, and that is why the United States will do what we must to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

We know from painful experience that the path to security and prosperity does not lie outside the boundaries of international law and respect for human rights. That is why this institution was established, from the rubble of conflict. That is why liberty triumphed over tyranny in the cold war, and that is the lesson of the last two decades as well.

History shows that peace and progress come to those who make the right choices. Nations in every part of the world have travelled this difficult path. Europe, the bloodiest battlefield of the twentieth century, is united, free and at peace. From Brazil to South Africa, from Turkey to South Korea, from India to Indonesia, people of different races, religions and traditions have

lifted millions out of poverty, while respecting the rights of their citizens and meeting their responsibilities as nations.

It is because of the progress that I have witnessed in my own lifetime, the progress that I have witnessed after nearly four years as President, that I remain ever hopeful about the world that we live in. The war in Iraq is over. American troops have come home. We have begun a transition in Afghanistan, and America and our allies will end our war on schedule in 2014. Al-Qaida has been weakened, and Osama bin Laden is no more. Nations have come together to lock down nuclear materials, and America and Russia are reducing our arsenals. We have seen hard choices made, from Naypyidaw to Cairo to Abidjan, to put more power in the hands of citizens.

At a time of economic challenge, the world has come together to broaden prosperity. Through the Group of 20, we have partnered with emerging countries to keep the world on the path of recovery. America has pursued a development agenda that fuels growth and breaks dependency, and has worked with African leaders to help them feed their nations. New partnerships have been forged to combat corruption and promote government that is open and transparent, and new commitments have been made through the Equal Futures Partnership to ensure that women and girls can fully participate in politics and pursue opportunity. Later today, I will discuss our efforts to combat the scourge of human trafficking.

All those things give me hope. But what gives me the most hope is not the actions taken by us, not the actions of leaders; it is the people that I have seen — the American troops who have risked their lives and sacrificed their limbs for strangers half a world away, the students in Jakarta or Seoul who are eager to use their knowledge to benefit mankind, the faces in a square in Prague or a parliament in Ghana who see democracy giving voice to their aspirations, the young people in the favelas of Rio and the schools of Mumbai whose eyes shine with promise. Those men, women, and children of every race and every faith remind me that for every angry mob that gets shown on television, there are billions around the world who share similar hopes and dreams. They tell us that there is a common heartbeat to humanity.

So much attention in our world turns to what divides us. That is what we see on the news. That is what consumes our political debates. But when you strip it all away, people everywhere long for the freedom to determine their destiny; the dignity that comes with work; the comfort that comes with faith; and the justice that exists when Governments serve their people and not the other way around.

The United States of America will always stand up for these aspirations, for our own people and for people all across the world. That was our founding purpose. That is what our history shows. That is what Chris Stevens worked for throughout his life.

I promise you this: long after the killers are brought to justice, Chris Stevens's legacy will live on in the lives that he touched, in the tens of thousands who marched against violence through the streets of Benghazi; in the Libyans who changed their Facebook photo to one of Chris; in the signs that read simply, "Chris Stevens was a friend to all Libyans". They should give us hope. They should remind us that so long as we work for it justice will be done, that history is on our side and that a rising tide of liberty will never be reversed.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the United States of America for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Barack Obama, President of the United States of America, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Serbia.

Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Nikolić (*spoke in Serbian; English text provided by the delegation*): Your presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session, Sir, is a great honour for Serbia. In congratulating you on the appointment to that post, I express my belief that you will discharge such responsible duties with full

commitment to respect for the values and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. I am sure that you, Mr. President, will rise to the tasks entrusted to you by all Member States that supported your appointment.

The Republic of Serbia pays particular attention to strengthening cooperation within the framework of the United Nations. The Charter of the United Nations, which unites us, its purposes and principles and the international system based on it are the only foundation for the development of international relations, the promotion of human rights and the maintenance of peace and security. Those purposes cannot become obsolete. They must always remain current, and therefore require that we be resolute in our goal to join forces and efforts in order to ensure a brighter and safer future for all humanity.

The world in which we live and the changes brought about by development in many areas on a daily basis make it incumbent upon us to change together and to face the numerous challenges that none of us can deal with individually. For that reason, we must always bear in mind the responsibilities vested in us as the representatives of our countries and the consequences of the decisions that we take.

The challenges facing the world have been further exacerbated by the continuing global crisis having longer lasting consequences than expected. Today, more than ever before, we need cooperation and understanding in order to overcome problems and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

We have no choice but to get to grips with problems and end the recession, which can be measured against the crisis of the 1930s, and to hope that it will not last longer than that calamity. The crisis, from banking to the balance of payments, mortgages and debts, is affecting all countries without exception. However, by far the greatest burden is borne by the most vulnerable: poor countries and countries in transition that have not even caused it.

We are faced with a serious threat to international integration and to the further definition of national and supranational policies. The problem is not insoluble. The solution lies in greater responsibility, coordinated international activities and the appropriate correlation between the actions of countries and their national interests.

The growing poverty in many countries and the widening gap between the rich and the poor are becoming increasingly alarming and an unwarranted and unacceptable trait of the great scientific and technological progress of the modern world. In many cases, we see sanctions and isolation exacerbating the problem.

Poverty reduction is one of the Millennium Development Goals. In that context, I would like to point out the importance of support for and solidarity with underdeveloped and developing countries. We need solidarity. Be mindful that today, poverty and starvation are not only a characteristic of underdeveloped countries. The continuing global economic crisis has also highlighted the issues of poverty and a lack of food and drinking water in some developed and, until recently, wealthy countries. Those phenomena are, at the same time, a real source of serious security risks. Consequently, I take this opportunity to call upon the rich and powerful countries drawing special benefit from globalization to direct a part of their wealth towards the economic and social development of underdeveloped countries.

A more equitable distribution of assets, solidarity and support to underdeveloped and developing countries should be jointly agreed upon along, with systematically planned and organized solutions. Such measures would foster implementation of the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations in the real world of today. An economy based on renewable energy sources, energy efficiency, responsible utilization of resources and socially responsible commerce would significantly contribute to reducing poverty and starvation in the world.

I underline our political commitment to the idea of sustainable development and welcome the initiative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations regarding renewable energy sources for all. I hope that it, along with other provisions of the Declaration adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, will be among the agenda items to which the General Assembly will pay special attention at its sixty-seventh session.

I consider it our joint obligation to preserve planet Earth in a way that it deserves. The idea of a better world involves this planet that we will preserve for the next generation. We should understand that the Earth should be treated like a living organism, and we can

only hope for the better if we look after it on a daily basis.

Within the limits of its possibilities, Serbia will contribute to research into renewable sources of energy, devoting special attention to the education of younger generations on ways of achieving harmony among efforts in planet conservation, development and profit.

Climate change is one of the problems affecting us today that we were not sufficiently aware of in the past. In the opinion of many, climate change is the direct consequence of irresponsible behaviour on the part of mankind towards nature and the immediate environment.

I wish to stress our principled position that it is the collective obligation of all of us to fight the negative impact of climate change through cooperation, tireless research, the sharing of knowledge and experience and by defining and strictly applying measures designed to respond to the new climatic conditions. The survival and progress of mankind are the eternal ideals of each human community, while sustainable development is a necessary precondition to achieving those ideals.

Poverty, famine and limited access to clean water pose grave threats to human health. Anything is possible for a healthy man, although he may have many problems; however a sick man has only one problem — how to get healthy. Therefore, I would like to particularly emphasize the importance of quality medical care for children and women, in particular mothers, as well as the importance of the continuing struggle against all communicable and non-communicable diseases.

When it comes to the progress of humanity, the importance of education must not be ignored. I believe that investing in education is the best way to invest in future development. Furthermore, access to knowledge and education should not be the privilege of the chosen, but the standard available to all. Only when a computer and book replace a gun in the hands of young people will happier pages of human history be written.

For several decades, my country has spared no effort in contributing, within its capabilities, to multinational operations mandated by the United Nations. Thousands of Serbian soldiers have been deployed in missions to all continents. Even today, under new national legislation in line with modern defence and security strategies, members of the Serbian Army and the Serbian police are taking part in the international effort to keep the peace from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, to Lebanon, Cyprus and Haiti. Our active participation in the coming period will be even greater and more visible.

Despite the great efforts made by nearly all countries, terrorism continues to pose a threat to international stability. That phenomenon is not only characterized by sporadic attacks, but today represents a danger to the core values of the United Nations and a threat to international peace, security and the rule of law.

Terrorism is an attack against fundamental human rights, including the right to life and individual civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. In addition, it undermines the development of countries in every sense of the word. Given the fact that all countries are vulnerable to various manifestations of terrorism, only by joining forces will we be able to fight that evil.

Serbia has aligned its legislation regulating its security sector with the relevant international instruments. Through regional cooperation, my country strives to contribute to global and regional efforts aimed at countering terrorism. In that context, it is of vital importance to make progress on the adoption of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism. At the same time, Serbia has undertaken various activities to suppress organized crime, which is often linked with terrorism, as well as to fight trafficking in narcotic drugs, human beings and arms.

Encouraging dialogue among various cultures and faiths is increasingly important in today's world. The Republic of Serbia is a country of religious people, who worship God in Christian churches and cathedrals or in mosques and synagogues. I can proudly say that my country is a place where various cultures and religions have intermingled, and spiritual and material heritages have incorporated traditions and elements derived from various completely different religious and ethnic affiliations, which have continued to intermix and whose wealth will be passed on to future generations.

No one should suffer or be humiliated because of their religion. Religious feelings are sacrosanct and safeguarded as fundamental human rights. No life should be lost in religiously motivated clashes. Irresponsible individuals ridicule relics that others worship, yet certain people who have been hurt have reacted inappropriately. That is why we strongly condemn attacks on innocent people, who should be

especially protected. On behalf of the Serbian people, I offer our sympathies to the United States over the killing of the United States Ambassador to Libya.

Serbia plays an active role in regional organizations, including the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. That regional cooperation mechanism is based on the principles of understanding and mutual respect aimed at achieving common goals. Serbia has successfully presided over regional initiatives, including the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, the Central European Initiative, the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative, the South-East European Cooperation Process and the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative.

Serbia truly wishes to become a full-fledged member of the European Union (EU) and is patiently building relations of confidence and peace in a region that is burdened with the heavy legacy of the past. Serbia wishes to head for a better and more prosperous future, on an equal footing with all nations of the world. Much has been achieved so far in the implementation of reforms, the fight against crime and corruption and the harmonization of its laws with the regulations of the European Union.

In that sense, Serbia has performed even better than some countries that have already become EU members. Unfortunately, despite its strong commitment to strict compliance with international law and all fundamental instruments regarding the work of the United Nations, the Republic of Serbia is now faced with a violation of certain fundamental principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations in a part of its territory. On 17 February 2008, the authorities of the self-proclaimed Republic of Kosovo unilaterally declared the independence of the territory of Serbia's southern province. I am not a prophet, but I must say that the unilateral declaration of independence by the province of Kosovo constitutes a dangerous precedent and a long-standing threat to the stability of the region of the Western Balkans and beyond.

That unilateral act also violated the bedrock principles of the Helsinki Final Act and Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). I wish to emphasize that the majority of Member States of the United Nations have refrained from recognizing the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo, thus remaining true to the obligation to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia, which is an obligation derived from the Charter.

I take this opportunity to express our gratitude to those countries for their support and solidarity, as well as my hope that, in spite of any pressure and with a view to maintaining peace and stability, they will not recognize any solution that is not the outcome of negotiations and a clearly defined agreement between the Serb and the Albanian parties.

Serbia is a peace-loving country that is open to the east, west, north and south and has friends all over the world. It stands ready to discuss all outstanding issues with all parties and will do its utmost to ensure that all its citizens live well, including in Kosovo and Metohija. According to our Constitution, Kosovo and Metohija is an integral part of Serbia, and the territorial integrity and the sovereignty of United Nations Members form the cornerstones of key international documents. Serbia is a sovereign and independent State and a Member of the United Nations, with defined and internationally recognized borders and a part of its territory is under the administration of the family to which it belongs, the United Nations.

As a Member of the United Nations, Serbia is a victim of the application of double standards. The principle of respect for territorial integrity implies the non-acceptance of bids for secession and the prevention of efforts to change the internationally recognized borders of other States. For the country I represent, peace and respect for international law come before all other interests and objectives. Political and armed violence are not nor will ever be acceptable means for achieving State interests in international affairs. Our battle against the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo and Metohija is part of the general struggle to preserve the principle of respect tor territorial integrity. Today, the struggle for the territorial integrity of Serbia is also the struggle for peace in all countries of the world and for the rule of law in international relations.

Serbia is proud of having excellent and substantive relations with most countries and it is proud of its own history. As is true in all nations, some individual Serbians have made mistakes and even committed crimes. We have turned over those of our own citizens suspected of having breached international law to international justice. For that reason, we rightfully expect justice for our country and its people, who were on the side of law and justice in both World Wars. We paid a heavy

price fighting fascist and totalitarian ideologies, losing almost half of our population, and we fought shoulder to shoulder with the Allies, along with whom we then founded this Organization. A community is based on justice, which implies reconciliation and trust. How is it possible that the rules of international law and justice have been violated to such an extent that, in the case of Serbs in Serbia, one can reasonably speak of discrimination?

American President Dwight Eisenhower said, in a speech delivered on 31 October 1956,

> "There can be no peace without law and there can be no law if we were to apply one code of international conduct to those who oppose us and another for our friends."

Is it possible to have negotiations in which one party gets everything, including territory and even many of the other party's people, and the other party gets nothing in return, except further pressure and new conditions? We are more and more frequently forced by the powerful and mighty to face the tough choice between giving up Kosovo and Metohija and membership in the European Union. What kind of a choice is that? Am I to tell our citizens that they are going to live better if they abandon their own interests? Has Serbia ever asked anyone to make such a decision? I hope that no one in this Hall will ever have to face such a choice.

Serbia is seeking a lasting, sustainable and acceptable solution to all problems. It aspires to make progress towards a European future and is fully committed to a process that will result in enduring peace between Serbs and Albanians. The Republic of Serbia and myself, as its democratically elected President, are ready to participate constructively in the negotiating process, because Serbia cannot move forward without Kosovo and Metohija, and the inhabitants of Kosovo and Metohija cannot move forward without Serbia. We strongly desire that the talks be continued in good faith and with good intentions, taking into account, among other things, that it is important to carry forward European integration involving Serbia and the Western Balkans as a whole in order to ensure long-term progress and stability for the entire region.

Serbia has made committments and will fulfil all obligations it has undertaken as a State in the agreements reached thus far, even though to my eye they represent essentially the wish list of the Albanian party with some concessions made by our leadership at that time under heavy pressure. At the same time, it should be understood that Serbia is not ready to recognize, and cannot nor will ever under any circumstances recognize, either explicitly or implicitly, the unilaterally declared independence of its southern province of Kosovo and Metohija. The issue of Kosovo and Metohija can be resolved and will be resolved in a peaceful manner. Serbia will enter the follow-up negotiations ready to help all citizens of Kosovo and Metohija to live a better life in democratic and secure conditions, but it will not negotiate the implementation of the independence of the so-called State of Kosovo.

The situation will come to an end, even though we constantly hear that the status of Kosovo is non-negotiable and that it is not up to us to decide it. I wonder, then, what the subject matter of negotiations could be and what entity has any authority to determine it? Serbia offers a concrete proposal: direct negotiations at the highest political level. An agreement can be reached only through consensus without unilateral decisions and actions.

I take this opportunity also to condemn most strongly the attempt by the so-called Republic of Kosovo to dispossess Serbs of the tangible heritage of the Serbian medieval State, the spiritual heritage of the Serbian people and the property of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the territory of the southern Serbian province of Kosovo. I can only understand the attempt to turn four monasteries of the Serbian Orthodox Church into a part of the cultural heritage of the so-called Kosovo State as an effort flagrantly to falsify history, as historical revisionism and as an attempt to obliterate any trace of the existence of the Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija.

I am particularly concerned over the fact that, even now in the twenty-first century, such an attempt to falsify history and to steal the cultural heritage of a nation is taking place before the very eyes of the entire international community. That sets a very dangerous precedent, encouraging each and every secessionist group in the future to take over the history of the expelled people after illegally separating the territory from the State in question. In the case of Kosovo, 220,000 people were driven out of their homes.

Serbia urges an investigation into the allegations contained in the report by Mr. Dick Marty, Special Rapporteur of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Some people ought to have a guilty

conscious because of the fact that two years have elapsed since the publication of the report cataloguing cases of harvesting and trafficking in human organs before, during and after the events of 1999. We are simply asking for the truth. We seek to uncover the destiny of hundreds of Serbs missing from Kosovo and Metohija, who are reasonably believed to be the victims of illicit trafficking in human organs and of other crimes committed in Kosovo and Metohija. In the name of my people, I simply demand justice for the innocent victims. For the sake of the truth an investigation should be carried out, bearing in mind that Serbs were always unjustly portrayed as the sole perpetrators of crimes, and never as victims,

Serbia is merely asking for the same obligations and rights for itself as for others, for the same appreciation of its interests as for those of others and for the same kind of attention to itself as to others, so as not to become unworthy of its ancestors and so as not to fail in its debt to its born and unborn children.

I conclude by affirming that the Republic of Serbia will make a selfless contribution to achieving the objectives of the General Assembly and its Member States. I am convinced that the accomplishment of those objectives is only possible through respect for the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter and through an active involvement of all Members in the promotion of multilateral cooperation.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Serbia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Boni Yayi, President of the Republic of Benin

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Benin.

Mr. Boni Yayi, President of the Republic of Benin, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Boni Yayi, President of the Republic of Benin, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Yayi (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the African continent and as Chair of the African Union, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session, and at the same time congratulate the Secretary-General for his leadership role for the peace and prosperity of our people.

In our world, shaken by so many multifaceted crises, the Assembly's general debate offers us the opportunity to transcend our national interests to contemplate together the ways and means to ensure international peace and security and to improve global governance for healthy economic growth, which is the guarantor of sustainable human development. In that regard, I welcome the relevance of the theme of this session, on the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means. It is a logical follow-up to that of the previous session, which focused on mediation in the settlement of disputes, and amply demonstrates the importance that the United Nations accords to international peace and security, the foundation of a better world characterized by stability, equity, solidarity among nations, justice, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and international cooperation.

With regard to the conflicts and other wars that shake our world, the African continent faces many challenges which it cannot straighten out by itself. We hope that the General Assembly's attention, focused since its previous session on the thorny question of conflicts and how to settle them peacefully, will help Africa to find appropriate solutions so that it can dedicate its resources and energies to the sustainable development of its States and to the well-being of its populations.

The major constraints on Africa's economic development and social progress are at once sundry and variable. They include, inter alia, the illicit and massive circulation of small arms and light weapons, which feeds chronic insecurity and transnational organized crime in States and regions of the continent heretofore havens of peace and prosperity. There is an upsurge in terrorist acts in the Sahelo-Saharan area and activities related to transnational crime, such as abductions and illegal trafficking of all kinds, in particular of humans, and trafficking in narcotics and counterfeit medications. Piracy and armed robbery at sea confront the States of the Gulf of Guinea and the Horn of Africa. We see ongoing unemployment and underemployment, lack of food in some regions and chronic malnutrition

in many countries. Soil degradation and erosion increase, and natural disasters, the consequences of climate upheavals and change recur. Poor governance in international economic relations engenders an economic and financial crisis.

In spite of the difficulties and shortfalls noted in their operation, the different elections that have taken place in many African States in 2011 and 2012 show the determination of the African peoples and their adherence to the process of implanting democracy and the rule of law in our dear continent.

I take this opportunity to focus particularly on the efforts underway in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), supported by the African Union, to deal with the grave security and institutional crises that have taken place in particular in Mali and Guinea-Bissau.

In Mali a very disturbing situation is developing which has to do with the occupation of the north of the country by terrorist cells that threaten to destabilize the entire West African subregion and could threaten security on the continent and throughout the world. The terrorist cells share the same intolerance that is destabilizing the democratic Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The international community has a duty to act decisively against that terrorist and fundamentalist threat and ensure that human rights are respected. I would like to reiterate from this rostrum my pressing appeal for the international community to commit itself, along with ECOWAS and the African Union, to eliminate that serious threat to peace and security in the subregion and to prevent large-scale humanitarian disasters.

I am not forgetting the situation in Guinea-Bissau, which continues to hold the attention of ECOWAS and of the African Union in spite of progress made through mediation between the different the parties concerned, including ECOWAS, the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, the United Nations and the bilateral and multilateral partners. I hope that the initiatives will continue to help to bring about a coordinated approach to the crisis in order to reach an international and national consensus on the situation in that country.

I welcome the different efforts by the African Union and the international community in pursuit of peace with regard to the various other hotbeds of tension on the continent, namely, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, the Sudan, South Sudan, Madagascar, et cetera. We must strengthen the strategic partnership established between the United Nations Security Council and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union with regard to conflict prevention, mediation, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and the promotion of human rights and humanitarian law for the certain benefit of our people. We must also think more deeply on ways to ensure predictable and sustainable financing for African Union peacekeeping operations, including the African Standby Force.

As shown by the crises that are shaking our planet, the system of global governance that has prevailed up to now is suffering from serious disfunctions. It is therefore high time to accelerate the process of reforming the international system in order to democratize the mode of operation of its institutions and mechanisms that regulate and promote cooperation among States.

Since the 2005 World Summit, various measures having to do with rationalizing the United Nations system have been taken and have resulted in particular in the establishment of new bodies that have proven very useful. The Peacebuilding Commission, created to break the cycle of violence in countries emerging from conflict, has contributed to their stabilization by providing them targeted support to confront troubling situations. Similarly, the Human Rights Council is contributing to improving global governance with regard to the protection and promotion of human rights, humanitarian law and fundamental freedoms.

In the same spirit, negotiations to reform the Security Council must be intensified to achieve in the near term the establishment of an inclusive Council, one that would repair the historical injustice done to Africa with respect to its presence in that organ, which heads the collective security system established by the Charter of the United Nations.

Completing Security Council reform would, I am sure, result in more serenity in the handling of the world's current major problems in the area of international peace and security. It would confer greater legitimacy upon the actions of our common Organization and would allow it to renew its original vocation as an instrument of conflict prevention and resolution. It would also allow it to shed the inconsistencies that limit it to the incongruous role of an observer of carnage taking place before its very eyes. Those laudable reforms must be complemented by a system offering the youth and

women an opportunity to get more involved in the life of the United Nations.

Peace in the world is possible. We cannot ignore the situation in the Middle East. Today the United Nations has the means to find a fair and sustainable solution to the Palestinian problem, and under no pretext should it shirk its duty and historical responsibility. We are talking about security, stability and peace, not only in the Middle East, but for the entire world. Africa is fully in favour of the "one land, two States" solution to restore lasting peace in the Middle East, because in the end the two peoples — Palestinians and Israelis — must be able to live in love, friendship, peace and prosperity.

As the Assembly knows, the world economy still suffers from the financial and economic crisis that was unleashed in 2008. In spite of the macroeconomic policies established by both developed and developing countries, with the support of the national and international financial institutions, the economic slowdown that began in 2008 has persisted, with the corollary of weak and fragile economic growth and more than 75 million unemployed people throughout the world, with very high unemployment rates in the developing countries.

The prices of raw materials, which are the major source of export earnings for developing countries, have become very volatile, as have the prices of food commodities. Flows of private capital meant for foreign direct investment cannot escape the negative impact of the crisis. At the same time, we see a tangible reduction of aid for development and other forms of official flows from countries of the North to those of the South.

With regard to food security, almost 16 million people in Sahel countries face problems of famine and nutrition, in spite of the many efforts made individually by our States and the collective initiatives in the African Union through the New Partnership for Africa's Development and through the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme. In fact, of 40 countries facing a food shortage throughout the world, 34 still are in Africa, even though about twenty of them have allocated at least 20 per cent of their budget to agriculture. That is why the nineteenth ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union adopted a decision declaring 2014 the Year of Agriculture and Food Security in Africa to mark the tenth anniversary of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme. The forecasted increase in food commodity prices, according to recent estimates of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and the already high costs of energy are certainly additional burdens for already vulnerable populations.

We also welcome the positive initiative of the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition taken by President Barack Obama on the margins of the Group of Eight Summit, held on 18 and 19 May at Camp David, which calls for bringing together donors, partner countries and the private sector for a common cause aimed at pulling 50 million people out of poverty in the next ten years. We hope that this will allow us to mobilize more assistance for African countries in order to improve food security and nutrition in order to accelerate their progress towards achieving the Millenium Development Goals.

It is also important not to disappoint the hopes raised by the conclusions of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), which adopted more than 700 official commitments and promises of gifts totaling more than $500 billion. The impact of those conferences will be measured by the fulfilment of the decisions and commitments.

Africa hopes that the results of the work of the high-level group of eminent persons selected by the Secretary-General to advise him on the post-2015 development programme and the working group to define sustainable development goals will be able to achieve convergence in their efforts to suggest a vision of sustainable human development, capable of mobilizing the international community so as to achieve equity and attain a prosperity shared by all.

Africa, the cradle of humankind, is also a continent of the future, of hope and hopefulness. Indeed, thanks to the incalculable potential of its subsoil and to the youthfulness of its population — which in 2050 will number 2 billion, 60 per cent of whom will be less than 35 years old — Africa could become the driving force for growth of the global economy, if that youth becomes professionalized.

That is why we raised to cardinal principles the values of unity, stability, peace, security, good governance and the struggle against any impediments to our development, particularly corruption, impuntiy, the loss of accountability, fratricidal wars, political and institutional instability and brutal challenges to the constitutional order. We have affirmed all of those

values through the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, the African charter on public service and the African peace and security mechanisms, et cetera.

Africa has decided to establish a free trade zone throughout the continent and is in the process of accelerating its economic integration through its ambitious programme of developing infrastructure — namely, energy, railroad networks, airports and ports. That feeds the hope that we will have support for private-public partnerships to finance those wide-ranging infrastructure programmes.

In our implacable fight against poverty, Africa has no choice but to persevere in its efforts to ensure progress in the areas of food, nutrition, health, water provisioning, sanitation, primary, technical and professional education for all, and the independence of women and children.

The fight against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria is a top priority for the continent, and we will not be idle as long as we have not achieved the objectives that we set in Abuja. In that regard, we welcome the decision adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union asking the Commission of the Union to develop a road map for the African Union for shared responsibility and global solidarity in combating HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria in Africa for the period of 2012 to 2015. A high-level coordinating meeting on the subject will take place tomorrow, 26 September 2012, at United Nations Headquarters.

Mr. Schaper (Netherlands), Vice-President, took the Chair.

I call on the spirit of solidarity of developed countries and of countries of the South that are experiencing considerable economic expansion to set up, according to their historic responsibility and their abilities, opportunities to assist the efforts of African countries, as was agreed during the fourth Ministerial Conference of the Least Developed Countries, held in Istanbul, Turkey in May 2011, as well as at the Group of 20 Summit in Los Cabos, Mexico, in June. The recommendations of those bodies reflect well our common ambition to transition of half of the least developed countries to the category of middle-income countries by 2020 — an ambition that has been fully integrated into the Rio+20 vision.

My fervent wish is that the current difficulties of development partners of the North, due to the sovereign debt and bank crises, and the austerity measures that they are rightly imposing on themselves do not deflect them from their commitments to a significant increase in development aid. In that regard, I am pleased by the reaffirmation at the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development of the resolve of heads of State and Government to spare no effort to more promptly achieve internationally agreed development goals, including attaining the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, while bearing in mind the concerns linked to the risks that current production and consumption methods pose to the planet in terms of the accelerated depletion of resources and the challenges for future generations.

I am convinced that a new world is possible. It presupposes inclusive governance in international political, financial and economic bodies. Moreover, the continuing challenges facing humanity make us fully aware of our interdependence and the need for an agreed system of governance in managing international relations rather than withdrawal and resort to unilateralism and coercive domination.

I remain convinced that a new world characterized by peace, stability, security and the shared prosperity of our planet and our peoples will emerge only by the international community sharing its technology and financial resources, together with the wealth of the African continent. May God bless our planet.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Benin for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Boni Yayi, President of the Republic of Benin, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Sauli Niinistö, President of the Republic of Finland

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Finland.

Mr. Sauli Niinistö, President of the Republic of Finland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Sauli Niinistö, President of

the Republic of Finland, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Niinistö: May I begin by congratulating Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. Let me assure him that Finland is fully behind him as he fulfils his important duties. We look forward to close cooperation with him.

I have the pleasure and honour to address the General Assembly for the first time as President of the Republic of Finland. The United Nations is the forum to which our peoples' expectations are directed when challenges that affect us all need to be addressed. We in this Hall must recognize our responsibilities. We all must be ready to shoulder them.

A profound change is sweeping over the globe. Rapid economic growth in the countries of the global South has already made greater well-being a reality for hundreds of millions of people. More people have the chance to lift themselves out of poverty. More people have the opportunity for political participation. These developments will make our world more just and less prone to conflict. That is in Finland's interest. It is in the interests of us all.

At the same time, the tectonic plates of economic power are shifting. Global instruments are needed to manage that shift. The United Nations and the various "G Groups" need to work together better. We recognize that such groups have an important role to play in making the United Nations a more dynamic and relevant player in the world economy.

Finland sees itself as a responsible member of the international community — a good global citizen, if you will. We support the United Nations in word and in deed because it is in our national interest to do so. The United Nations is a genuinely universal forum for cooperation. It has unique legitimacy. For us, it is an indispensable means to promote international peace and security, development and human rights. As a small country — there are only some 5 million of us Finns — a world order based on respect for the United Nations Charter and international law is a must. It is not an option.

Finland is a candidate for non-permanent membership in the Security Council for the term 2013-2014. We wish to shoulder the responsibility that membership in the Council entails. We believe that we could make a contribution. Finland would approach the issues on the Council's agenda as an engaged Member State. We would be ready to look for constructive and even-handed solutions to common problems. We believe that as a small and militarily non-aligned Member State, we have what it takes. Finland's candidacy enjoys the full support of the other Nordic countries — Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

The ability to prevent conflict around the world remains the United Nations core mission. It is the yardstick by which United Nations successes or failures are measured. It is the Security Council that shoulders the main responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Peacekeeping mandated by the Council is an important means at our disposal in that regard. Finland has participated in United Nations peacekeeping as long as it has been a Member State. We are also ready to share with other Members and regional organizations the expertise that we have gained with respect to training peacekeepers. Our training centre, the Finnish Defence Forces International Centre, is at the service of the United Nations.

Peacekeeping is indispensable but is not enough. Soldiers are needed to secure the conditions for peace to begin to be built. However, in the end, peace is built by civilians. That is why Finland has long paid special attention to civilian crisis management. Finnish experts — police officers and experts in the rule of law, gender equality and human rights — participate in peacekeeping operations in many parts of the world.

Effective mediation is also a must. Finland has made a strong contribution to mediating conflicts. My predecessor, President Martti Ahtisaari, won the Nobel Peace Prize for his decades-long career as a successful mediator. At the initiative of Finland and Turkey, a resolution was adopted in this Hall last year that strengthened the normative basis for mediation (resolution 65/283). I am glad that the Secretary-General will soon make his guidelines on mediation available to all Member States, regional organizations and other actors. I encourage him to make full use of the powers that the Charter grants him in that regard.

Respect for the rule of law is part and parcel of building peace in post-conflict societies. Impunity often leaves behind the seeds of another conflict. In the long run, economic development is sustainable only if the rule of law is respected. It is encouraging that the

High-level Meeting on the rule of law yesterday showed that there is indeed the political commitment to further such efforts.

Respect for the rule of law instructs us to honour the beliefs of others, but it also requires us to condemn all violence. Finland, together with the other Nordic countries, will again introduce a draft resolution on the protection of diplomatic missions in the General Assembly. Upholding diplomatic rights and immunities is in our common interest.

Poverty reduction is the ultimate means to secure peace in many parts of the world. That requires, above all, economic growth and a level playing-field for all. Development cooperation can assist, especially in the least developed countries. Those countries that already suffer the effects of climate change are particularly vulnerable and in need of our support. Finland has a record of being a reliable partner for developing countries stretching over half a century. Despite the well-known budgetary pressures within the euro zone, Finland has increased its outlay fordevelopment cooperation to an annual level of about $1.5 billion in recent years.

Weapons of mass destruction remain an existential threat to international peace and security. Finland has been a strong supporter of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons from the very beginning. The non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, disarmament and the right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy are all necessary parts of the whole.

Finland is prepared to host a conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction this year. The task has been described as difficult but, rest assured, we will do our utmost to complete it. Nuclear material cannot be allowed to fall into the wrong hands. Finland is on track to fulfil the commitments that we undertook at the Washington conference in 2010. National measures and international cooperation are both needed to stop nuclear terrorism. As a user of peaceful nuclear energy, Finland is strongly committed to continuing the process.

Chemical weapons were totally banned some years ago. The treaty is not yet universal, though. The Finnish Institute for Verification of the Chemical Weapons Convention is an established and respected institution. Should the need arise in the Middle East, Finland is ready to put its expertise at the disposal of the international community.

The conventional weapons trade clearly needs better global regulation. It is regrettable that the negotiations on the arms trade treaty ended without the desired outcome. The goal is in sight, however. It is important to ensure that the process continues within the United Nations context. As one of the sponsors, Finland continues to reach out for a substantive treaty and one that is as universal as possible.

In Libya, the United Nations was instrumental in laying the groundwork for a new and hopeful future for its people. In Syria, the tragic situation is, if anything, getting worse. The Security Council has not been able to take the leading role that it is expected to take under the Charter with respect to threats to peace such as in that country. The General Assembly has, on the other hand, sent a strong signal that the international community cannot remain indifferent. The killings of civilians must stop. All members of the Security Council must cooperate to find a way out of the crisis. The authority of the United Nations will suffer if efforts to end the crisis move elsewhere.

The Syrian conflict has overshadowed the Middle East peace process. That is something that the parties and the international community can ill afford. A two-State solution, within which an independent, viable and contiguous Palestinian State lives in peace and security with the State of Israel, is slipping out of reach. The Palestinians have waited patiently. The negotiations must restart. That is the only way forward. Renewed negotiations need to result in a sustainable solution that leads to the establishment of a Palestinian State, while respecting Israel's legitimate security concerns. Settlements are squarely a contravention of international law and a growing obstacle to peace.

The President returned to the Chair.

The Security Council has powers, but with authority comes responsibility. I hope that, in a few weeks, at an election held here in this Hall, Finland is entrusted by fellow Member States with such powers and the attendant responsibility for two years. Finland will act in the Council in accordance with the United Nations Charter and on the basis of our values. We will work constructively and pragmatically in order to maintain and strengthen international peace and security to the best of our ability.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Finland for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Sauli Niinistö, President of the Republic of Finland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Demetris Christofias, President of the Republic of Cyprus

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Cyprus.

Mr. Demetris Christofias, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Demetris Christofias, President of the Republic of Cyprus, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Christofias (*spoke in Greek; English text provided by the delegation*): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session and to express my delegation's support to you in discharging your duties I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, for the excellent way in which he conducted the work of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the work of the Organization (A/67/1).

Owing to its geographical location and historical ties with its neighbouring countries, Cyprus has been closely following and has taken particular interest in the developments in the wider Middle East and North Africa over the past 18 months. The sovereignty of peoples was and remains a fundamental principle of the Organization and the functioning of States. As the international community, we should, in our opinion, address events there through that prism, respecting the right of each people to determine its own future.

During that period, we witnessed transformations in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya. We stand by those peoples through that transition and encourage their efforts on the difficult road to consolidating democracy and the rule of law. We look forward to new structures that are inclusive of women and minorities and that create the conditions for the further participation of citizens in political life.

It is with great sadness, however, that we are witnessing the loss of human lives in the region. Increased violence in Syria continues, and the potential spillover effects to neighbouring countries are a great cause for concern. We strongly condemn the violence and the massacres of innocent civilians in Syria and call for their immediate cessation. There is undoubtedly a humanitarian crisis there that needs urgent attention. Recent consultations in the Security Council have emphasized that. The Republic of Cyprus stands ready to contribute to international efforts to manage the crisis, in particular as the fire is raging just outside our door.

We remain committed to respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria and emphasize that the continued violence and its recent intensification underscore the need for a political solution. In that respect, I join the rest of the international community in expressing our unequivocal support for the newly appointed Joint Special Representative for Syria, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, with the sincere hope that he will help bring the conflict to an end.

Against that background of significant changes in the region, the Middle East peace process continues to be at an impasse. It is imperative to resume negotiations that can eventually lead to the implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and the establishment of a free and independent Palestinian State on the basis of the pre-1967 borders. At the same time, the solution must address Israel's legitimate security concerns.

No viable solutions can be achieved in the absence of political dialogue. As you, Mr. President, wisely proposed upon your election, the "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means" is the overarching purpose of the United Nations. It nevertheless also remains a timeless challenge. I can personally attest to that.

Cyprus still faces the consequences of foreign intervention, namely, the Turkish invasion and occupation. More than one third of my country's territory is still under the military occupation of Turkey, a fellow Member State of the Organization.

Our participation at the United Nations requires engagement in the struggle for the protection of human rights. We share a commitment to the rule of law and are proponents of peace and security in the world. Yesterday, we supported the Declaration of the High-level Meeting on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels (resolution 67/1), affirming the sovereign equality of States and respect for their territorial integrity.

Yet Turkey, after invading Cyprus in 1974, has continued to occupy the northern part of the island for the past 38 years, maintaining a strong military force and continuing the mass transfer of settlers from Turkey, pursuant to its policy for the demographic alteration of my country's population. Turkey continues to violate the human rights and fundamental freedoms of tens of thousands of displaced persons, including usurping their property and violating the rights of the besieged and those who have lost their loved ones and continue to search for them.

Since the assumption of my duties as President of the Republic of Cyprus in 2008, I took the initiative, in collaboration with the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, to end the stalemate and to start a new process of direct negotiations with the then leader of the Turkish Cypriot community, Mr. Mehmet Ali Talat, on the basis of a bicommunal and bizonal federation with a singly sovereignty, citizenship and international personality. We came to an agreement on those conditions with Mr. Talat. The process began under the auspices of the Secretary-General and is being facilitated by his good offices mission on the island.

I believe that the Turkish Cypriot side, under Mr. Talat, shared the vision of a solution, for the benefit of all Cypriots, to terminate the occupation and establish the conditions for lasting peace and security on the island. Despite the difficulties posed by the occupation, at the time we achieved convergence in a number of important areas.

Since 2010, however, despite committing itself in the presence of the Secretary-General to continuing the talks from where they had left off, the current Turkish Cypriot leadership, under Mr. Eroğlu, has broken that joint commitment and has retracted from the agreement worked out with the previous Turkish Cypriot leader. In addition, since last March, the Turkish Cypriot leadership, with Turkey's support, has abandoned the negotiations in response to the assumption of the presidency of the Council of the European Union by the Republic of Cyprus.

For our part, we remain committed to Security Council resolution 2026 (2011), which provides that an accord on the internal aspects of the Cyprus issue must be achieved before convening an international conference on the international aspects of the matter with the consent of the two communities.

We remain unchanged in our commitment to returning to the negotiating table; to continuing the negotiations in good faith; and to respecting in practice, not just in words, the agreed basis for the solution of a bicommunal and bizonal federation with a single sovereignty, citizenship and international personality and political equality, as defined in the relevant Security Council resolutions.

We are grateful to the Secretary-General, who has willingly devoted his time and effort and invested in that process, despite the many challenges that this international Organization faces.

I call on the Turkish Cypriot leadership to return to the table and to share our vision for a united and peaceful Cyprus. A solution to the Cyprus problem requires the support of all concerned parties. Turkey's positive contribution and practical support for efforts on the part of the two communities to take the process forward is crucial. Yet Turkey has instead been pursuing "gunboat diplomacy", with frequent displays of military strength around Cyprus.

Turkey's alarming behaviour has been escalating since September 2011, when Cyprus undertook exploration activities in its exclusive economic zone, based on its rights under international law and particularly the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Turkey has neither signed the aforementioned Convention nor abided by relevant customary international law. On the contrary, Turkey has carried out unilateral actions with respect to sea areas that are situated patently beyond any reasonable geographical or legal limit of its continental shelf and potential exclusive economic zone and that clearly fall within the exclusive economic zone and continental shelf of the Republic of Cyprus.

Turkey is behaving as if the Republic of Cyprus did not exist on the map of the region. Such behavior, by a country seeking to become a member State of the

European Union and supposedly seeking to maintain zero problems with its neighbours, cannot and should not be tolerated by the international community. I call on Turkey, before this Assembly, to cease its provocative behaviour. I repeat at the same time that in a reunified Cyprus the natural resources, including hydrocarbons, will be the common wealth of all Cypriots — both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots alike.

The deadline set by the international community for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in 2015 is nearing. We have seen much progress thus far but much more remains to be done, as poverty and hunger persist. In looking beyond 2015, we need to recommit ourselves to a solid new agenda aimed at poverty eradication, inclusive economic and social development, environmental sustainability and peace and security for all.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Cyprus for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Demetris Christofias, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar.

His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Sheikh Al-Thani (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset I would like to congratulate Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session and to wish him all success.

I would also like to express my thanks to Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the General Assembly at its previous session and one of the most capable Qatari diplomats, for his efforts to ensure the successful work of the General Assembly.

I would also like to seize this opportunity to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his continued work in support of the role of the United Nations.

These days, the Arab world is experiencing a difficult and risky period that is, at the same time, full of hope. As a matter of fact, it is an impressive attempt to correct prevailing conditions in a region with a special history, at a time when the world order is rapidly changing. The current period represents a special, new and unprecedented experience that forms part of human history. Today's experiences differ from the previous experiences of nations and peoples who participated in changing times. They accepted the necessary consequences and bore the costs with the knowledge that the costs were consistent with moving forward at the appropriate time in response to ambitions towards freedom, enlightenment, respect for the dignity of man and development. But the Arab experience of transition is unique in its pace and process.

Conditions in the Arab world, seen from afar, may show disturbances and problems in many places with images of smoke and flames. However, I would like, from this rostrum, to reassure all those who are following the events in the region and may sometimes feel uncomfortable about what they see and hear. Those events represent the movement of a nation struggling to cope with the times and continue its forward march, as it has many times before. Yet now that march has been interrupted by obstacles, both external and internal and regional and international.

Those obstacles have frustrated its will and derailed its march. But it has recently taken matters into its own hands after having suffered dictatorship, dependence and corruption.

We remember that the American political and social experience was born of a civil war that the country had to undergo to affirm its unity. Today's Europe experienced terrible world wars until it achieved a degree of unity that could not be achieved by arms or hegemony. And Asia has seen highly successful cases of nations advancing and achieving their aspirations, after long periods of painful new birth.

I say this to assure whoever cares about our part of the world and its future that what is going on in our region is natural and historic.

It is not reasonable to expect that people can attain their freedom as soon as they ask for it. Human history

shows that peoples have sacrificed their lives and wealth to gain freedom. In the same way, dictatorships do not change at the first signs of revolution but require real resistance to depose them. The desire for advancement will not eliminate backwardness except through hard work. Occupied territories will never be restored by a mere rejection of the occupation, but by persistence in demanding rights and by resistance using all legitimate means.

What adds to the difficulties of the transition in our Arab world is that it takes place in a time of great aspirations and a climate subject to all sorts of changes and complications. Our peoples have had to fight to change their lives under circumstances that differ greatly from those faced by others in similar situations. In America, Europe, Asia and other places, historical transitions have taken place within certain limits. In the Arab world, however, that birth has had to take place under spotlights, before the eyes of the entire world, under the watchful eye of satellites crisscrossing space and shaped by electronic media, without any shield or barrier of any sort.

In order to achieve their objectives, those who undertake internal and external interventions to peoples from attaining their legitimate rights do not hesitate to use all means at their disposal, from exploitation of the past and its complex legacy to other means of provocation. They can even use arms, shedding seas of blood, if other means fail or take too long. All of that has made our transition from past to future and from backwardness to development a risky process, under fire from all corners.

Together with others, we realized the risks inherent in the current phase of the evolution of our nation and of the Arab world. If we could ask for one thing during this session, it would be an encouraging reconfirmation of the right of our Arab world to continue its advancement and achieve its aspirations in a new world, a world shaped by science and technology, a world that the pioneers who wrote the well-known conventions on rights and freedom could not have imagined.

On the other hand, I hope that this world gathering will take a stand that reflects sympathy with the historic transformations under way in the Arab world. That would reassure the people who are working hard and with determination to carve out a place for themselves in history and who struggle to achieve freedom and dignity, hoping for a better tomorrow for future generations.

The situation in Syria has reached an unacceptable phase. Hundreds of innocent Syrians are killed every day, under the fire of a regime that does not hesitate to use all sorts of weapons against its own people. We have used all available means to help Syria extricate itself from the cycle of killing, but in vain. The Security Council has failed to reach an effective position.

In view of that, I believe that the Arab countries themselves should intervene, in order to fulfil their national humanitarian, political and military duties, and do what is necessary to stop the bloodshed in Syria, the killing of innocent people and their displacement and guarantee a peaceful transition of power. We do have a precedent in that respect. Arab forces intervened in Lebanon in the mid-1970s to stop the internal fighting there, and their efforts proved effective and useful. We urge all countries that believe in the cause of the Syrian people to provide every type of support to that people until they are able to secure their legitimate rights.

Despite all the suffering in the Middle East, the core problem remains the Palestinian question: the continued Israeli occupation of the Arab territories in the West Bank, the Golan and Shaba'a farms in southern Lebanon, the stifling blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip and the continued arrest and imprisonment of thousands of Palestinians in Israeli prisons. The peace process has stalled because of the current Israeli position that insists on continuing the policy of settlements in the Palestinian territories and Jerusalem and refusing to cede them.

Sometimes I would like to ask why the international community does nothing to implement the relevant resolutions on the Middle East. Why does the Security Council not adopt a resolution under Chapter VII that would force Israel to lift the blockade of Gaza and stop its settlement activity, a resolution that would return the peace process to the comprehensive track instead of the piecemeal approach, which does not lead to results? I find no answer to my questions.

We firmly believe in the importance of the freedom of expression and the right of people to express their opinion based on our belief in the sanctity of humanity and the dignity of man, who was created by God as free and dignified. At the same time, we believe that freedom should not exceed reasonable limits and become a tool to hurt and insult the dignity of others or ther dignity of religions, faiths and sacred beliefs. This

is a phenomenon that we have seen lately and which has regrettably led to the killing of innocent people.

We have called and we continue to call for dialogue in order to exchange information and experience. We have called and continue to call for dialogue among civilizations and religions. We have established the Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue. We have called and still call for dialogue aimed at acquainting ourselves with ideas and experiences from all over the globe and to learn about different faiths in order to ensure that human culture is interconnected and everyone has a say in its creation. Everyone should reap its dividends, based on understanding, appreciation, knowledge and the full exercise of rights.

I have on previous occasions reiterated the importance of that question and the need to strike a balance between respect for sacred faiths and religions and freedom of expression in order for tolerance to replace intolerance and acceptance of the other to replace rejection and stereotyping, which is neither fair nor right. Today, I would like to take this opportunity to call on the United Nations, those who exercise wisdom and reason and those who have decision-making power at the international level to drsft internationally agreed laws, procedures and controls aimed at preventing religions and faiths from being insulted under any pretext and, at the same time, upholding the right of mankind to know and express its opinions.

Ms. Flores (Honduras), Vice-President, took the Chair.

One of the great challenges that we must face is the question of climate change and its terrible and destructive consequences for all countries. This requires us to cooperate and work together to reach the best solutions to that challenge and overcome our differences.

I would like to note that the State of Qatar will host the eighteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The importance of this conference is that it could produce a road map that could help us deal with the negative effects of this phenomenon. I would like take the opportunity of speaking in this international forum to invite all countries of the world to participate in the conference so that we may reach an international consensus on the matter.

Before concluding, I would like to welcome the election of our brother Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as President of the Somali Republic, and to wish him every success in achieving security and stability in that country, whose people have suffered so much. I call on the international community to exert greater effort to help Somalia to reach a solution to its crisis that is acceptable to all the Somali parties, one that will pave the way for the return of peace to the country and will help rebuild the State after the long years of war and destruction.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Amir of the State of Qatar for the statement he has just made.

His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Rossen Plevneliev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Mr. Rossen Plevneliev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Rossen Plevneliev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Plevneliev: It is a great honour for me to speak from this rostrum for the first time since I took office in January. I would like to congratulate President Jeremić on assuming the chair of this highly representative body and wish him success in his challenging task. I also wish to commend the work of his predecessor, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. Let me express our gratitude and appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his inspiring vision, reform efforts and result-oriented action. I also wish to welcome the appointment of Mr. Jan Eliasson of Sweden as Deputy Secretary-General.

Our time is marked by historic shifts and by achievements in science, technology and communications that shape the global economy and

politics but that, we should also bear in mind, have an impact on every human being. More and more nations around the world have now opted for open, free and democratic societies based on the rule of law and good governance. But such historic transformations do not always bring more peace and stability. On many occasions we still face extreme violence and bloodshed, causing senseless loss of innocent lives, human suffering and destruction.

The main theme of the Assembly's general debate today could not be more relevant for us as political leaders. Dealing with violent conflicts and promoting peace, security, development and human rights have always been at the core of the United Nations. At yesterday's High-level Meeting, we affirmed our credo that the rule of law forms the basis of a peaceful and predictable system of international relations. Nowadays, as conflicts have become more complex, we share the view that mediation and good offices should be the tools of preference for dealing with escalating tension.

Delivering justice is vital to addressing terrorism, one of the ugliest and most despicable crimes against humanity. No cause whatsoever can justify the indiscriminate killing of innocent civilians. Sadly enough, no country or human being today can feel safe or insured against this evil. Just a few weeks ago, at the Sofia synagogue, we paid tribute to the memory of five Israeli citizens and one Bulgarian who lost their lives in the shocking terrorist attack last July at the airport of Sarafovo, a lively tourist destination on our Black Sea coast. From this high stage today in New York, a few miles from the September 11 memorial, I now reaffirm our strongest condemnation of that awful crime. My country will spare no effort to bring the perpetrators and masterminds to justice. That attack on our own soil has made us stronger and more determined to align with others in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

We condemn the violent acts committed recently in the name of defending religious beliefs. This is unacceptable. We urge all involved to show tolerance and avoid provocative actions that can be destructive to peace and stability.

For more than a year now the continuing brutal violence in Syria has provoked our extreme concern. Each day brings testimony of unacceptable levels of bloodshed and human suffering. The regime in Damascus has lost all legitimacy by waging a reckless war on its own people and refusing to heed the calls for a negotiated way out of the crisis. Due to the growing number of refugees, the humanitarian situation is deteriorating day by day and the stability of neighbouring countries is also at risk. Bulgaria condemns these gross violations of basic United Nations principles and of international humanitarian law. We call for full accountability on the part of the perpetrators, including by bringing them before the International Criminal Court. My country subscribes to the acts of solidarity undertaken by the European Union and its members in providing relief to the suffering civilian population through emergency humanitarian assistance.

It is regrettable that the active involvement of the United Nations and the international community has so far failed to ensure the Syrian authorities' compliance with the peace proposals elaborated through international mediation. Bulgaria gave its full support to the diplomatic efforts of Mr. Kofi Annan and welcomed the appointment of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi as Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria. While the violence and bloodshed should be stopped immediately, we also call for the start of a transition towards inclusive and representative democratic rule in Syria, one that guarantees the rights of all citizens regardless of ethnicity or religion. Bulgaria has supported the Syrian opposition groups in their efforts to unite on an alternative to the current regime, on the basis of the vision of a new democratic State that can be a home that welcomes all Syrians.

The promotion of just, inclusive and transparent societies supports the process of democratic transition, known as the Arab Spring, that has swept across the Middle East and North Africa. Bulgaria welcomes the steps taken by several countries on the path to constitutional and political reform, and we trust that those are now irreversible.

At the same time, the need to reactivate the Middle East peace process seems now more pressing than ever. Bulgaria looks forward to the resumption in good faith of direct negotiations and expects both parties to demonstrate their continued commitment to a peaceful solution that respects the legitimate interests and sensitivities of the Israeli and Palestinian people. All efforts should made to create an environment conducive to a comprehensive peace settlement between the two States, a two-State solution. In that respect, we urge

both the Palestinians and the Israelis to refrain from any unilateral actions that could be destructive to the peace process.

Disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are areas that continue to demand strong political will and action by the international community. It is essential that we continue to strengthen the comprehensive regime of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and of other major international instruments, such as the Chemical Weapons Convention. With regard to conventional arms, Bulgaria consistently supports the negotiation process leading to the adoption of a legally binding arms trade treaty that is robust in substance.

Along with others, we believe that Iran's full cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency is of paramount importance. The Government in Tehran must show greater transparency of its nuclear activities and fully comply with all relevant Security Council resolutions. We look to a resumption of the high-level negotiations on the future of Iran's nuclear programme and a clear demonstration of political will by the Iranian authorities to undertake concrete confidence-building steps and address the concerns of the international community.

Bulgaria highly values the role of the Human Rights Council as the primary United Nations body for the protection and promotion of human rights. I am delighted to announce that my country will be seeking, for the first time, election to the Council for the period 2019 to 2021.

Over the past two decades, Bulgaria has gone through a successful transition from totalitarian rule to a functioning democracy with an open market economy and a vibrant civil society. It has been a difficult, dramatic and sometimes turbulent journey. I think our greatest achievement in this process was to have preserved the long-standing tradition of tolerance and dialogue between ethnic and religious communities within Bulgarian society. That tradition can be clearly illustrated by a glimpse of the centre of our capital, where four temples of different religions — Islam, Judaism and Catholic and Orthodox Christianity — coexist peacefully, surrounded by archaeological monuments of several ancient civilizations.

It is in this spirit that we stand ready to share the experience from our road to democracy with other countries undergoing similar challenges. More than a year ago, Bulgaria initiated an international forum called the Sofia Platform , providing a useful venue for dialogue and an exchange of views and best practices among countries in the region. We got experts, officials and representatives from Governments, non-governmental organizations and civil societies all over the world focusing on the transition processes in Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans and the Middle East. The forum showed that although the historical, cultural and political realities vary in different countries and regions, conclusions and lessons learned can be relevant in the field of national reconciliation, rule of law, institution-building and security sector reform.

Bulgaria maintains its unwavering commitment to the process of European Union (EU) enlargement, involving all our neighbouring countries of South-Eastern Europe and the Balkans. We confirm our conviction that all States of the region should one day become part of the European Union, on the basis of their own merits and criteria fulfilled in the negotiation process. At the same time, pursuing the national reform agendas, solving outstanding issues and building regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations, in accordance with the European standards, is of direct benefit to all countries of the region and their European perspective. All of us in South-Eastern Europe are interested in promoting business and human contacts with our neighbours, developing cross-border projects and facilitating travel, building railways and highways, and developing communications and regional energy and transport infrastructure facilities — all as part of the pan-European networks. That is why we need to make the best use of existing regional bodies, such as the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the South-Eastern European Cooperation Process with its Regional Cooperation Council.

A few months ago, at the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development, we made a good start on the path to a greener and safer world. The outcome documents indicate that sustainable development is the only possible way forward. The triple-win policies envisaged in the outcome document, "The future we want" (resolution 66/288, annex) seek to advance social development, economic growth and environmental sustainability, all at the same time. Our task now is to focus on the Conference follow-up and to deliver. The General Assembly should discuss the formulation of sustainable development goals to be integrated into the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015. We see an important role for the Economic and

Social Council in the process, and we stand ready to contribute, taking the opportunity of our membership in the Council.

In the context of the United Nations development agenda, let me stress that Bulgaria, as an EU member, is deeply committed to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and is working to gradually increase its share as a donor of development and humanitarian aid, in compliance with the commitments it has undertaken. During this Assembly session, Bulgaria will sign the Food Assistance Convention.

Being myself a strong supporter of greater focus on education as a key area for sustainable development, allow me to express my high appreciation for the initiative of the Secretary-General "Education First". I am convinced that in a knowledge-based network of economies, education is the best investment in order to prepare young generations for global citizenship. We welcome the designation of UNESCO's Director-General, Mrs. Irina Bokova, as the Executive Secretary for this initiative. In view of her outstanding performance so far, Bulgaria advocates Mrs. Bokova's re-election for a second term at the helm of UNESCO for the period 2013 to 2017.

We highly value UNICEF's noble mission to promote children's rights, safety and well-being. Over the past few years, the role of UNICEF in Bulgaria evolved from the usual technical assistance to a strategic partnership with the Government in order to promote fundamental reforms. In November this year, my country will host a UNICEF-sponsored high-level regional conference on child care system reform.

Finally, let me assure the Assembly that Bulgaria will continue to give its full support to the noble cause of building a stronger, rule-based multilateral system with an enhanced role for the United Nations at its centre. Success on that path will be achieved only by working together.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Bulgaria for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Rossen Plevneliev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of the Republic of Indonesia

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Republic of Indonesia.

Mr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of the Republic of Indonesia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of the Republic of Indonesia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Yudhoyono: May peace be upon us all. I am honoured to represent my country, Indonesia, at this year's General Assembly debate to discuss how we can find better ways to peacefully resolve or manage conflicts around the world.

This, of course, is what the United Nations is all about: to end the scourge of war, and to create a peaceful and equitable world order based on international cooperation.

In the decades since its founding, the United Nations has developed a number of instruments to address conflicts in all their manifestations. During those decades, many inter-State and intra-State conflicts have been resolved — those in Angola, Bosnia, Cambodia, Timor-Leste, as well as many others.

The question we must now ask is whether those instruments are adequate to address the whole spectrum of conflicts that the world community now faces.

That is clearly evident in the Syrian crisis. The world community is witnessing, with great pain, the worsening violence and unfolding humanitarian catastrophe on the ground; at the same time, the United Nations is in a state of paralysis in responding to the situation. There is no end in sight to the conflict, and it appears that we have not yet seen the worst of the crisis.

Indonesia therefore reiterates its call for the immediate cessation of violence in Syria, which has taken a high toll in innocent civilian lives. The Security Council must now unite and act decisively, as mandated by the United Nations Charter, to bring the situation under control.

Clearly, whatever the explanation, the present international system cannot for now resolve the Syrian conflict. There is every likelihood that the community of nations will see similar conflicts in future. It will be in a different corner of the world, and in a different form, with different actors. It will not help the cause of international peace if, once again, we end up being divided and unable to positively alter the course of the conflict. The world community must develop ways to address them more effectively, towards their peaceful end.

We must adapt to twenty-first century security challenges. There is no question that the world we live in today is in much better condition than it was in the twentieth century. Freedom has spread. The threat of nuclear holocaust is receding significantly. There is no prospect of a world war, the kind that twice created such destruction during the twentieth century. The global economy has expanded remarkably. Nations are becoming more interdependent. International cooperation and partnerships are flourishing.

However, it is only relative peace, not total peace as yet. We have moved from the era of the cold war to an era of "warm peace". In this warm peace, the world remains stuck with an outdated international security architecture that still reflects twentieth-century circumstances, in contrast with the global economic architecture, which has done much better in adjusting to the twenty-first century.

In this warm peace, the relationships between the major Powers are, for the first time, marked by relative stability and increased cooperation. But the question remains unanswered as to how they will accommodate the growing ranks of emerging Powers that are reshaping the world order.

In this warm peace, old enmities and long-standing conflicts can still resurface in the new strategic landscape, even carried on by new generations.

In this warm peace, we are seeing new security challenges and opportunities arising from the seismic power shifts that are occurring in some regions. The security implications of the political events in the Middle East are still unfolding.

In this warm peace, the world community still has to contend with an array of unfinished business: the Arab-Israeli conflict, nuclear disarmament, territorial disputes in the South China Sea, tensions in the Korean peninsula, and the like.

In this warm peace, new progress can easily regress. Hard-won peace processes can stall or even crumble. Strategic miscalculations in disputed theatres may lead to rising tensions and armed clashes.

And in this warm peace, pockets of hatred and bigotry, intolerance and extremism continue to litter our world.

Perhaps we will have to live with this warm peace for decades. But I believe that we can lower the temperature of this warm peace. Where possible, we can resolve conflicts one by one. We can strengthen the building blocks of peace. We can promote a new globalism that can potentially change the dynamics of conflict resolution.

In order to do that, we need to try new approaches and be more imaginative. The first thing we have to do is to evolve a new strategic mindset. Let us face it: remnants of the cold-war mentality still persist in parts of the geopolitical landscape, not least in our own United Nations, where rigid, dogmatic, zero-sum calculations sometimes still come into play. For long-term peace, a peace born of trust and mutual confidence, we must get rid of that mindset. In that light, we must continue to work towards a reformed Security Council, a Council that reflects the strategic realities of the twenty-first century and provides security to all.

We must also work to perfect the instruments of peace, which include robust regionalism. We in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have seen how such regionalism can be a force for peace and cooperation. As a result of a strong regionalism, all of South-east Asia has thrived under ASEAN cooperation. South-east Asia, which was once the cockpit of border wars and the proxy wars of extra-regional Powers, has come together.

After ASEAN was founded, in 1967, it devoted the early decades of its life as a regional organization to cultivating the habits of dialogue, consultation and cooperation, not only among its members but with its dialogue partners. Thus, each ASEAN country adopted a new strategic mindset based on trust and a sense of having a stake in the success and progress of all the others. Today the ASEAN family is united and at peace with itself and with the rest of the world.

At the same time, we can also develop a universal culture of mutual tolerance and mutual appreciation of one another's religious convictions. In such a world, the voice of the moderates — the voice of reason and compassion — would be heard clearly over the din of prejudice and bigotry. In a global regime of compassion and tolerance, no war is possible.

As a nation that celebrates its diversity of culture and religions, Indonesia calls for mutual respect and understanding among peoples of different faiths. Despite initiatives undertaken by States at the United Nations and in other forums, the defamation of religions persists. We have seen yet another of its ugly faces in the film " Innocence of Muslims" that is now causing an international uproar.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights underlines that, in exercising freedom of expression, everyone must observe morality and public order. Freedom of expression is therefore not absolute. Hence, I call for an international instrument to effectively prevent incitement to hostility or violence based on religion or belief. As the product of international consensus, that instrument should serve as a point of reference with which the world community must comply.

For good measure, we also need to promote a continuing process of dialogue among faiths, civilizations and cultures. Of course, that dialogue should not remain a dialogue, but should translate into actual cooperation so that peoples of different cultures and faiths can come together as a community and care for one another. Those communities will become bulwarks for peace and they will make it difficult if not impossible for any kind of armed conflict to erupt.

We must also master the art of preventive diplomacy. Most disputes are intractable; they simmer for what seems to be an eternity, but by a historical reckoning they are not really long, drawn-out affairs. Sooner or later, there comes a confluence of factors and events that provides a window of opportunity for resolving a dispute and removing conflict from the table of options.

That is what we in ASEAN have done with the potential conflicts in the South China Sea. The territorial and sovereignty disputes have been festering there for the better part of a century. But we are managing them with restraint, confidence-building and, at present, through earnest negotiations toward a legally binding code of conduct in the South China Sea.

Finally, the culture of peace, mutual tolerance and appreciation, and cooperation must be supported by the right kind of economics. People need to be fed, to be sheltered and to be assured of a future where they have opportunities for a living and a livelihood. That is the only way for peace to be locked in for the long term; that is, when it brings dividends that give human beings robust confidence in the future.

The price of inequality between and within nations gives rise to tension born of grievances that can, unless effectively addressed, lead to radicalism and even violence, which threaten international and national peace and security. The solution is to form a global partnership for poverty eradication and for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and then to formulate a post-MDG development agenda we can fully carry out.

Our experience in the resolution of the intra-state conflict in the province of Aceh proves that, if we do enough for peace, if there is a confluence of favourable circumstances, and if we are prepared to seize the moment, then peace can be achieved. The peace that we achieve will not only give temporary respite, it will also last for generations.

For many years, peace has been treated as if it were a science. There are whole libraries about how it can be achieved and preserved. I have come to the conclusion, however, that if peace has a technology it is one born of experience. That experience can be shared and can be useful in creating new experience. And if there is enough sharing of experiences — and that is what Indonesia is trying to achieve — and if there is sufficient political will to apply what is learned from others to one's unique circumstances, then peace can be widely spread. Peace can be effectively waged. And we would have a gentler, better world.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Indonesia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of the Republic of Indonesia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Georgia.

Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Saakashvili: It is always a great honour for me to address the General Assembly. The Assembly gives us a unique opportunity to debate the key challenges of our world and time, and to identify and confront the problems that our nations are facing. It is a moment of collective reflection and it should be a moment of truth.

Today, 20 months after the act of despair of a young Tunisian citizen that strongly shook the world and generated so many hopes around the globe, many people have doubts.

Some are telling us that the images of liberation and joy seen around the world have been replaced by broken promises, despair and chaos, that the world was better off when fewer people were free, and that the international system was more stable when fewer societies were open.

I have come here today to make the opposite argument. I have come here today to make the case for open societies.

After the horrible attack on the United States consulate in Benghazi and the death of Ambassador Chris Stevens, I called the American Ambassador in Georgia to convey my condolences and to speak to him, to share my sorrow and express my support for this unique nation.

I was struck by what he told me. I was struck by the fact that American diplomats, beyond their pain and their anger, still believed so clearly that the liberation of Libya was fundamentally a good thing. Just a few days ago, the United States Ambassador in my country was proved right by the demonstrations held by the citizens of Benghazi, who went out to protest against extremist militias and to show their support for the achievement of peace and prosperity in their own country.

I was also struck by the visit last week to the United States by Aung San Suu Kyi, the joyous reception that America gave her, and her desire to come and tell her story with serenity and determination, a story of progress towards freedom in the face of seemingly impossible odds.

Twenty months after the act of despair and tragic death of Mohamed Bouazizi, there are many who doubt the cause to which Ambassador Stevens gave his life, who doubt the vision of Aung San Suu Kyi, who doubt freedom. I am totally certain that the skeptics are wrong. A free society has never meant a society without problems. On the contrary, an open society has problems, exposes them, shows them, deals with them and does not neglect them, because it keeps arguments open and gives Government a chance to be accountable.

An open society is a place where improvements are often reached through noisy, painful and chaotic processes. Montesquieu wrote a long time ago that if everyone agrees with the Government and everyone agrees with one another, that is not a country; that is a cemetery.

I speak from personal experience. My own country confronted democracy's challenges once again this past week when evidence emerged of abuses in our prison system. The facts were sickening, and our responsibility was clear. Our reaction was swift, and we did what democracies must do. We identified those responsible, and they were all arrested. Two Government Ministers have resigned, and we put in charge of the prison system its fiercest critic: the Georgian human rights defender, Georgia's ombudsman. That is how democracies learn; that is how we improve.

That is how my own Government has overcome past errors and challenges to emerge stronger, more effective and ever more committed to building and institutionalizing an open society.

It is clear that there are no shortcuts to accountability, and no fast-track lines to freedom. Building and maintaining an open society entails a painful learning process and significant risk-taking. But the conclusion we must draw in this respect, from Georgia to the events in Myanmar, is this: such risks are worth taking.

I am speaking to the Assembly on the eve of crucial elections in my country. I realize clearly the magnitude

of the challenges that face this body and this troubled world, from the menace of nuclear proliferation to global warming and poverty. But today I ask for the Assembly's attention with respect to the events unfolding in Georgia, because I believe that they are part of the broader, global question facing us today: whether the quest for democracy and freedom can and will endure.

I came here to say that Georgia will remain an open society. That is the choice of our citizens, and there is no alternative to this. On 1 October, my nation will vote in parliamentary elections. We look forward to that day and to the opportunity to renew and strengthen the fundamental social contract that allows citizens to freely judge and choose their leaders.

Georgia has conducted several elections in recent years, all of which were monitored by international observers and all of which were free and fair. We live in a world in which yesterday's accomplishments are never enough, and I have made a commitment to the effect that this year's vote will be even more free and fair than the previous ones. We have taken numerous steps to pursue that goal. We have increased public funding and given free airtime on all national channels for ads from all political parties, in addition to whatever they can buy with their own money. We have proposed to all national television channels a "must carry/must offer" requirement, to ensure that all private cable networks, large and small, broadcast all news-based television, and they have accepted that proposal.

We have welcomed the first televised debate in our country's history between candidates for Prime Minister and heads of candidate lists. We have initiated a code of conduct to eradicate political intimidation, the use of administrative resources, vote-buying, campaign-related violence and hate speech in any shape or form, which for so many years was used to promote hatred against ethnic and religious minorities.

Regrettably, not all actors in the Georgian political arena share those principles, and some are purposefully working to undermine the legitimacy of Georgia's democratic institutions — how they are perceived at home and by the international community.

Our response to deliberate attempts to short-circuit our democracy is straightforward: democratic, transparent and rule-of-law-based processes will not be compromised. This is not only my demand; it is the demand of the people of Georgia.

Georgia is a young democracy, and we know the value that comes from partnerships and engagement with the international community. As in the past, we have once again opened our doors and invited credible international election monitors to visit our country, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Parliament, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, the United States Congress and respected international non-governmental organizations.

To date, the interim reports of almost every election observation mission have consistently underscored that these are the most competitive elections in Georgia's history. On 1 October, notwithstanding significant attempts to undermine that dynamic, the Georgian people will make their decision. I am confident that Georgian democracy will prevail and reject those who seek to close Georgia's doors.

Georgian democracy will prevail if, and only if, Georgian elections remain a Georgian process. Today, in this forum, I am obliged to draw the Assembly's attention to externally generated security threats to my country. The European Union monitoring mission has just announced that Russian forces are currently undertaking a massive, illegal military buildup, occupying territory inside Georgia, on the former territory of South Ossetia, which is within Georgia's internationally recognized borders.

Even as we speak, they are bringing offensive weapons and troops inside our internationally recognized borders.

The Russian military has made the extraordinary decision to hold large-scale military exercises in the North and the South Caucasus on the eve and around the time of our elections. One cannot imagine an approach more provocative and irresponsible than that of mobilizing military forces during this crucial moment of any nation's democratic life.

There has been involvement by Russia for months: first, billions of dollars in Russian money came into the Georgian election campaign. Lots of other resources were allocated, and now Russian troops are trying to be some kind of background players in this process. That is why I call today on all our allies and friends, and all members of goodwill in the international community, not to ignore or dismiss this worrisome development.

I would like to use this opportunity to ask the world to pay attention during the next few days, to speak in a unified voice against these threats, in support of our sovereignty and democratic institutions.

In short, the vigilance and engagement of Member States is required to ensure that history does not repeat itself and that 2012 does not become a repeat of 2008, or especially of 1921, when Russia ended our independence and we became a place that was dominated by violence and oppression for 70-plus years.

We should look at what has happened in recent years. We had a massive-scale invasion by Russia, the successor to the Soviet Union, in 2008. We are a country of just 4.7 million people — less than 5 million people — and that country is 100 times larger, and well armed. If we look at history, we see that during the twentieth century it invaded many countries. The Soviet Union invaded Baltic countries; it invaded large parts of Poland and ended its independence.

In 1956 the Soviet Union invaded Hungary, killed its President and ended its independence. In 1968 it invaded Czechoslovakia, deposed its Government and ended its independence. In 1979 it invaded a much bigger country than Georgia, Afghanistan, killed its President within one hour and ended its independence. In 2008 it invaded our country, a smaller country than any of those I have mentioned, and occupied part of its territory.

However, none of the strategic goals of the Russian invasion was achieved. They had three explicit goals in invading Georgia. The first was to depose the Georgian Government, end Georgian democracy and physically destroy Georgia's leadership. Those are not my words or a conspiracy theory. That is what they themselves overtly stated in every open and closed international forum. The second goal was to shut off the energy supply for different regions of the world and to monopolize the energy supply in the part of the world where Russia lies. That totally failed. Georgia is developing and its energy corridor is developing. The third goal was to stop the enlargment of NATO and to halt any kind of inclusion of the region into international organizations. Russia also failed at that goal.

We often say that after the Russians failed to physically destroy the Georgian leadership, failed to succeed in any of the purposes of their invasion and basically were forced to stay where they are, within occupied territories — in what most of the world and most international organizations call illegally occupied territories, meaning that they will have to withdraw — now they are trying to undermine us because they have a strong sense of unfinished business.

It is not just the fate of a small country of less than 5 million people that is being played out in this scenario. The fate of the whole post-Soviet space is being played out, affecting 400 to 500 million people. Because Russia failed to destroy Georgian democracy in 2008, countries in Central Asia such as Ukraine and Belarus, people in the Republic of Moldova and Eastern Europe, all think that freedom is the right choice after all and that even the smallest free country cannot be undermined and destroyed if it stands strong and united and if the international community is there to help. That sets a very bad example from the Russian point of view.

On the other hand, because of Georgia's reforms and because of our openness to the great nation of Russia, we introduced visa-free travel for tourists from Russia. One million tourists will travel to Georgia from Russia this year and they will take back 1 million stories of successful development, of a country with new hospitals, with new cities, with sharply reduced poverty — a country moving towards universal health coverage and that has enjoyed double-digit growth, and is this year enjoying 8 per cent growth. It is a country that, even without oil and gas, is looking much better than most of the Russian region. Indeed, Russia's then-President Medvedev had to acknowledge twice in one week, in an open forum of journalists and his own parliament, that Georgian reforms were so successful that Russia had no choice but to study and copy them, even if they hate the Georgian leadership.

That is the ideological issue. That is why they want us out. That is why they want Georgia off the map. It is because if Georgia survives and if Georgia continues, it sets a bad example for all the others, including the Russian people themselves, from the point of view of the present Russian Government. The prison scandal we had recently involved things that happen almost every day in Russia, and are reported on social media in Russia as frequently, and no one there gives a damn about it. In the first case that came up in Georgia, two ministers and scores of others were arrested, which also sets a bad example in the eyes of people who want to suppress freedom. That is why it is so important that Georgian democracy is back and safe. It means that the whole post-Soviet space, our whole part of the world, will move in the right direction.

I call on the world to pay attention and send the right signals. I make the call knowing what our responsibilities are. In the face of the threats confronting us, our commitment to democracy and transparency is more important than ever. We remember the words of the American founding father who said that whoever sacrifices his freedom for security deserves neither. That is not just our response; it is the best response. Our transformation and the hostility it has generated among those who feel threatened by freedom have continued to make Georgia a test case for the entire region. What is at stake in Georgia today is the very idea that democracy can thrive in our part of the world.

Our common legacy from the dark time of the Soviet Union is now almost gone from Georgia. Organized crime — and Georgia was a hotbed of organized crime — is now almost gone from Georgia. Most of that legacy has migrated to other countries, including Russia. Corruption, coercion, intimidation, oppression, cynicism and despair: we condemn that way of life, that way of Government and of being governed. No, we can, we should and we will overcome that legacy. We are doing it in Georgia and it can be done everywhere else.

Will we face strong opposition? Yes. And we are well placed to say that, since our country is regularly threatened with destruction and annihilation, for the very reason that we choose another path — the path of freedom, the path of transparency and accountability, the path of meritocracy and an open society — we know how difficult it is to overcome those forces. But we know we can.

Sovietism and post-Sovietism is not a fate. Organized crime and violence is not a fate. Slavery is not a fate. Limited sovereignty as Brezhnev once defined it and Putin reshaped it is not a fate. Every country represented here is a free nation. We are all free peoples, made up of free individuals, and our future depends on us, on what we want and what we do.

There is nothing easy about saying this, and I do not say it lightly. The Georgian people know the price of freedom and still they think their freedom is worth it, because with freedom comes development and happiness, true stability and true peace. Our region will one day become a zone where free people interact peacefully, where respect will replace contempt. All the peoples of Central Asia and Eastern Europe, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Russia, the South Caucasus and North Caucasus, should hold hands together and shout down the voices of the past. Powerful voices continue to send the message that democracy, transparency and accountability are not possible. They say that freedom, meritocracy and respect for human rights are fundamentally alien. Georgia has proven them wrong. Our survival story has proven them wrong, just as many here today have in the past. As we have been learning from many people in the Hall, our efforts have shown that corruption, intolerance, intimidation, fear and violence are neither cultural nor inevitable.

Advanced democracy is a sign of a mature society. It is not easy to govern. Dissent, pluralism and vibrant debate, which are threats to others, are strengths to us. Our view is clear. One cannot gain enduring stability at the expense of liberty, and one cannot ensure lasting prosperity by sacrificing individual rights. Those short cuts never succeed in the long run.

In every culture, in every society, in every corner of the world, people will ultimately demand the right to choose their own future. Only Governments that meet that demand will achieve true stability. The fundamental contract is not always without difficulties. Governments that commit themselves to the process must be prepared for turbulence and disagreement. What is difficult for elected leaders is often beneficial for citizens; what is challenging for ruling parties is often necessary for the State. In pursuing the goals of freedom and accountability, our common efforts must be governed by the rule of law and a commitment to respect these fundamental principles. Violence and intimidation can never be legitimized, and a minority can never forcibly impose its views on the will of the majority. Guns, money, threats, hatred, blackmail and fear cannot be allowed to hijack the process.

At the same time, we recognize the potential threat of a majority trampling the rights and liberties of a minority. We respond to that threat by protecting the right to dissent, we respond by promoting pluralism, we respond by allowing every voice to be heard. And we respond by the law. I can testify to how difficult the process is, but I can also state unequivocally that no lasting alternative exists.

I want finally to share with the Assembly my hope and my trust. A few days from now, Georgians from all social, religious and ethnic backgrounds will collectively decide their future in an unoccupied part of our territory. They will express diverse opinions and wishes, and a new future for our nation will emerge.

Openness will be further enshrined. Transparency will be strengthened, and public accountability confirmed. The main thing that will be confirmed is that Georgia will not go back. It will not be dragged back under any pressure, under any dirty money from the North, under any threat of military exercise or direct military invasion or mass-scale disturbances or the emergence of some kind of militias emerge, as some have threatened. It is not going to work.

According to the European Union, we are the safest country and the least corrupt country in Europe with strong Government institutions that cannot be bribed and cannot be undermined. By constantly renewing the social contract, which is at the heart of every democratic nation, we will ensure that democratic principles and practices are with us for good.

I trust the Georgian people. I trust the international community and I trust that they will not allow others to destroy the will of my people or destroy my small nation's choice. I stated earlier that democracy is a difficult, sometimes noisy system. It presents challenges to those in and outside Government, and it forces leaders to place their trust in society. Personally, I see no credible alternative, and I saw no better reason to take risks. Fear is the paramount weapon of autocrats, while trust is a definition of democrats.

Let us all trust our citizens, even if autocratic forces much bigger than us are threatening us. The best defence for my country is openness, democracy, transparency and the work of institutions against all of those forces, against all the international mafias and against social and international pressures that contravene international law. Let us defend the institutions that support, strengthen and preserve our choice to be open and free.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Georgia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Danilo Medina Sánchez, President of the Dominican Republic

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Danilo Medina Sánchez, President of the Dominican Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Danilo Medina Sánchez, President of the Dominican Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Medina Sánchez (*spoke in Spanish*): We warmly congratulate Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session.

We are also pleased that the general debate of this session is devoted to considering, among other issues, the promotion of sustained economic growth and sustainable development in accordance with relevant General Assembly resolutions and recent United Nations conferences.

Since we adopted the Declaration that led to the Millenium Development Goals (resolution 55/2), the image of development has been tied to the reduction of poverty and to the development of capacities and opportunities for the most vulnerable populations. The majority of our developing countries had made significant progress in this area until 2008, when the financial crisis, which affected the world economy and threatened to cancel out our achievements, began.

We are living at a time of multiple simultaneous crises. The ecological crisis threatens the majority of our flora and fauna. Global warming threatens coastal populations and small island countries. Unchecked population growth threatens to exceed the capacity of nature to restore itself. We have witnessed a crisis of the values that have traditionally governed the behaviour of humankind. War and armed conflict threaten the right to cultural, ideological and political diversity and our right to live in peace and unity.

Those of us who live in the developing countries did not cause the world financial crisis. As you know, the crisis was caused by the failure to use effective regulations in the international financial system and by the arrogance, greed and unbridled desire to amass wealth. In the context of the crisis, age-old debates have resurfaced as to how best to tackle the crisis. Should we reduce investment in social protections for our populations? Or, on the contrary, should we bolster investment, making anti-cyclical social investment

policies into a springboard for reviving economies? And how do we measure poverty and development and recognize the social impact of the measures adopted? Do we use average income indicators for reducing social inequality and improving quality of life?

The countries in the developing world whose economies have performed better and have shown less vulnerability in the context of the world crisis have been those that have understood, in time, that investing in training our peoples and improving the quality of life of our peoples is the best way to reduce our vulnerability and to maintain economic growth. The economy must serve the people, not the reverse.

In the debate on development, we must reaffirm as peoples and as Government leaders that we have learned quite often through painful experience that equality and sustainability are key prerequisites for ensuring sustained and sustainable economic growth. Today, we know that it is not enough to have economic growth in order to reduce social inequity and to improve the quality of life of our peoples. Nor is it right to sacrifice our people in the hope that the growth of an economy will ultimately lead to benefits for all and reduce social inequality. That expectation quite often remains unmet. On the contrary, experience has shown that by improving the quality of life and by reducing poverty and social exclusion, we can help stimulate healthy economic growth.

In the context of international crisis and uncertainty, we must reduce national and international social inequalities. We must increase social cohesion and strengthen democratic governance. We also know that economic growth, which does not take account of the limits of natural resources and the needs of future generations, will entail the risk of imminent collapse. We must revise the ideas about development that have prevailed in the international financial system.

Equity and sustainability are two sides of the same coin, and that is how we must approach human development. That vision is consistent with international declarations on sustainable development, such as the Declarations issued by the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972, by the Rio Earth Summit in Rio de Janiero in 1992, and by the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. They promoted the three pillars of sustainable development: environmental equity, economic equity and social equity. Development means protecting environmental systems, raising the productive capacity of goods and services and reducing social inequality by raising the quality of life of all men and women, multiplying capacities and opportunities.

Today, 7 billion people inhabit the Earth. Of those, 43 per cent, or 3 billion, are under the age of 25. We must invest so that our young people have the skills and opportunities to tackle creatively the development tasks that face our societies. For many years, the development of countries has been assessed by international financial institutions, using measures of income or national production expressed per capita in order to determine the state of material well-being. Based on that kind of measure, our country, the Dominican Republic, has been classified in recent years as a medium high income country.

Nonetheless, more than a third of our citizens live in poverty. How then is it possible to exclude countries like ours from receiving development aid? By the same token, to give an international comparison, poverty has been measured in terms of income, with those families that subsist on less than $2 a day being defined as poor and those who live on less than $1.25 as extremely poor, an adjustment being made in both cases for buying power.

According to those criteria, over 2 billion people worldwide — 33 per cent of humanity — are poor, and in 2005 the number living in extreme poverty had dropped to 1.4 billion. Those same measures project that by 2015 only 883 million will be living in extreme poverty. The optimism of those international figures does not appear to coincide with the perception of many of our citizens, who feel that the increase in gross domestic product does not reflect their needs or despair, nor does it jibe with the unhappiness of our young people who, despite raising their educational level, are still unable to find dignified work or the opportunities to fulfil their business aspirations.

That discrepancy between the optimism of certain international indicators and the discontent on our streets can be explained by the fact that we are using inadequate tools to measure poverty, development and well-being. At least in the Dominican Republic, it is hard to believe that the quality of life and the opportunities to improve it would be very different for a person with an income of $2 a day than for someone earning a few cents less. Poverty in a given family or community is much more than the lack of income with respect to a predetermined

threshold, just as the development of a country is much more than the size of its median income.

The International Labour Organization reported in 2010 that 81 million of the 620 million young people between the ages of 15 and 24 worldwide who were economically active, which represents 13 per cent of that age group, had been unemployed during the preceding year, primarily due to the world economic and financial crisis. Between 2007 and 2009, the global unemployment rate for young people experienced the greatest rise in its history: from 11.9 per cent to 13 per cent. Young women had a harder time than young men in finding work.

The results in terms of health, education and maternal and child mortality show the limits of the unilateral and optimistic focus on poverty and development. Not without reason have some academics said that

> "we are gambling with the fate of our planet with 'games' in which a few private players reap the benefits and society pays the consequences. A system that permits results like those is destined to mismanage risk".

Social investment in the education, health and employment of young people can build the foundation for a strong economic base that can halt the transmission of poverty from one generation to the next. Strengthening young people's skills creates the conditions for them to earn higher income during their productive economic lives. The way we understand and measure poverty translates into national and international policy decisions.

To assume that poverty and underdevelopment are simply the expression of family income or national averages has led to limited social policies of entitlement or transfers. Such policies temporarily raise the income of impoverished families above the so-called poverty line, at the expense of developing universal, more effective and better-quality public service systems that would benefit, as a right, those who have traditionally been excluded.

Adam Smith, the father of economic liberalism, included in his definition of poverty such social and cultural aspects as "the ability to go about without shame". More recently, the Nobel Prize winner in Economics Amartya Sen spoke of development itself as freedom. In that sense, broadening our concept of poverty to include measures of social participation and inclusion, as well as unmet basic needs, will allow us to develop more holistic and effective responses. Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon, a complex system of problems that requires a systemic solution leading to broader skills, freedom and opportunities for those who have traditionally been excluded.

Investment in quality universal education and health systems, a universal safety net, access to dignified work and living spaces, personal safety and the security of goods, inter alia, are crucial elements for expanding the skills and opportunities of impoverished portions of the population. Poverty reduction is the basic lever for increasing the production of goods and services and for propelling new dynamics of growth and development. Assessing the development of countries exclusively on the basis of their national per capita income leads to decisions that have a negative impact on our efforts at development. When a country is ranked according to those simple criteria, the contribution of international cooperation is reduced and access to loans from international financial institutions is reduced or becomes more expensive.

As developing countries, we also need to shoulder our share of responsibility. Domestically, we need to improve our information systems in order to better understand our social, land and gender inequalities, as well the impact we have on the environment. At the same time, we must redirect our investment patterns and our public policies to promote equality and social inclusion for the most vulnerable groups, and for that we need the support of the international community. A country should not cease to receive development aid simply because its average national income has crossed a certain arbitrarily defined threshold.

Latin America has long experience with the search for multidimensional measures of poverty and development. Since the middle of the last century, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean has developed a methodology based on an index of unmet basic needs. Many countries have applied such composite multidimensional indexes. In the Dominican Republic we use a quality of life index tailored to our reality. The United Nations Development Programme has applied the human development index, and a number of other indexes have been proposed at the international level. Despite that, the majority of bodies in the international financial system continue to rely on one-dimensional measures that focus on monetary

income to assess and categorize the development of our countries and to determine their policies on the basis of criteria for international financial support.

We wish to avail ourselves of this opportunity to urge international financial organizations to be more ready and willing to embrace our efforts to break the vicious cycle of poverty and social exclusion as the basis for development. We need to use enhanced indicators with a greater capacity to capture and measure the complex dynamics of human development. What is needed is for us to work together to overcome exclusion, not to prolong poverty and extreme poverty indefinitely.

The Dominican Republic reiterates its firm commitment to peace, tolerance and international coexistence as well as to democracy and freedom as basic components for development. We hope that sustainable development will enrich the daily lives of individuals, families, communities and countries and will preserve our natural resources. Peace, the abolishment of social inequality, environmental sustainability and the sustained growth of our capacity to produce the goods and services required by our peoples go hand-in-hand, and they are the very core of development.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Dominican Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Danilo Medina Sánchez, President of the Dominican Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. François Hollande, President of the French Republic

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The General Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the French Republic.

Mr. François Hollande, President of the French Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. François Hollande, President of the French Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Hollande (*spoke in French*): This is the first time that I speak from this rostrum at the United Nations. It is a very moving moment for me because I understand what the United Nations represents, for our world, and what it has represented historically. I am also aware of a sense of responsibility, because France is a permanent member of the Security Council and therefore has duties. I am also here at this rostrum to talk about values that do not belong to any particular people, are not owned by any particular continent and are not the privilege of any particular part of the population.

I am here to talk about universal values, which France has always proclaimed, and about the rights of every human being, wherever they live: liberty, security and resistance to oppression. Those values and those rights are all too frequently held in contempt in our world, especially as we face three main threats, which we must tackle head-on. The first is the threat of fanaticism, which fuels violence. We have seen that yet again in recent days. The second is the global economy, which has been affected by a crisis and which perpetuates intolerable inequalities. The third threat is the disturbance in the climate system, which threatens the very survival of our planet.

The mission of the United Nations is to tackle these challenges and to find strong and just responses to them together. These responses must be just because without justice, force is blind, and they must be strong because without strength, justice is powerless.

I am also here to express France's confidence in the United Nations. In recent years, we have been able together, to finally put an end to deadly conflicts, and we have been able to prevent confrontations. However, just as we are sending out 100,000 Blue Helmets who act on our behalf — and I would like to pay tribute to them — because of divisions, the blocking of our own institutions and inertia, the United Nations has not been able to put an end to war, atrocities and attacks on the rights of peoples.

I would therefore, on behalf of France, draw one conclusion that I would like to share with the Assembly. If we want to make our world safer, it is up to us to fully shoulder our responsibilities. How can we do so?

First of all, we can do so by reforming our own Organization, the United Nations. The Security Council must better reflect the realities of the world today. This is why I would once again recall that France supports the request for an enlargement of the Council made by Germany, Japan, India and Brazil. But we are also

in favour of an increased African presence, including among the permanent members. Having a seat on the Security Council is not a privilege justified by history, and it is not a matter of satisfying some ambition related to economic power. No, having a seat on the Security Council means making the commitment to take action to promote peace in the world. Indeed, we must act and act together, but act quickly, because it is urgent.

The most urgent situation is in Syria. The Assembly has several times denounced the massacres carried out by the Syrian regime, called for those responsible to be prosecuted and expressed the desire for a democratic transition. But the ordeal of the population continues to this day. There have been almost 30,000 deaths in the last 18 months. How many more deaths will we wait for before we take action? How can we allow the paralysis of the United Nations to continue?

I know one thing for certain: the Syrian regime will never again take its place among the alliance of nations. It has no future among us. This is why I have taken the decision, on behalf of France, to recognize the provisional Government representing the new Syria as soon as it is formed. That Government will itself have to give guarantees that every community in Syria will be respected and will be able to live in security in their own country. Without further delay, I would ask that the United Nations immediately give the Syrian people all of the assistance and support they are requesting and, in particular, that the liberated areas be protected and humanitarian aid be assured for refugees. As for the leaders in Damascus, they must know that the international community will not stand by if they take the unhappy decision to use chemical weapons.

Another situation that is urgent is the fight against the most serious of threats to stability in the world, namely, the proliferation of nuclear weapons. For several years now, Iran has been ignoring the demands of the international community. It shuns monitoring by the International Atomic Energy Agency. It does not keep its word or uphold Security Council resolutions. I had hoped that negotiations could take place in earnest and that steps could be outlined, but, again, no negotiations have taken place. France will not accept such actions, which threaten not only security in the region but peace throughout the world.

I therefore state once again that we are prepared to adopt new sanctions, not to punish the great people of Iran, but to tell their leaders that enough is enough and that negotiations must be resumed before it is too late.

The third urgent issue is at last to find a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The status quo is not a response; it is an impasse. France will make every effort to re-establish the basis for negotiations leading to the coexistence of the two States in question; everyone knows that this is the only solution that could lead to a just and lasting peace in the region.

The last of the urgent issues that I will mention, although there are many others, might be the most important one for us to focus on this week: the Sahel. The situation created by the occupation of territory in northern Mali by terrorist groups is intolerable, inadmissible and unacceptable. It is unacceptable not only for Mali, which is affected by that terrorist threat, but also for all countries of the region and beyond the region — all of those that one day might be affected by terrorism.

The African Union, which I commend, and the Economic Community of West African States have said that they are prepared to take courageous decisions. The authorities of Mali have spoken; there is no time to lose. France will support any initiative that will enable the Africans themselves to resolve that issue within the framework of international law, with a clear mandate from the Security Council. Mali must recover its territorial integrity, and terrorism must be eliminated from that area of the Sahel.

The role of the United Nations is to respond to urgent situations. But there is another objective that should unite us here, and that is development. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio, in which I participated, was a disappointing stage for some and an encouraging one for others. I believe that today we have an agenda that should encompass economic growth, poverty reduction, social progress and environmental protection. That is what we need to do over the long term.

The 2015 deadline for a climate agreement is fast approaching. I wish to state here that France is ready to host the United Nations conference on climate change to be held at that time, because I want us to succeed together in meeting that challenge.

In parallel, I would recall that one of the disappointments of Rio was our failure to agree on the creation of a major United Nations organization

for the environment. That remains France's objective. Such an agency would be based in Africa, because that continent, which has been neglected for too long, is facing climate-related challenges. It would also be highly symbolic to entrust Africa with such a global agency for the environment.

With respect to development, I believe that we should face reality. We will not achieve the Millennium Development Goals without new resources. Everyone knows the budgetary limitations of our respective States. That is why today, from this rostrum here at the United Nations, I am making an appeal for innovative financing, which would give us the means to enable our organizations to fight effectively against diseases such as HIV/AIDS and malaria.

I would like to commend the success of the International Drug Purchase Facility, which was financed by a tax on airline tickets. That path has been opened, and today we must take another step in that direction. I propose a tax on financial transactions — which several European Union countries have already agreed to — aimed at slowing down the movement of capital or at least financing development and helping to fight health-related scourges. France has adopted such a tax. We have also made another commitment: to dedicate at least 10 per cent of the benefits of that tax to development and to fight health-related threats and pandemics.

That is the message that I wanted to send to the Assembly today: let us ensure that a global tax on financial transactions can be levied and that the benefits it yields can be spent on development and fighting pandemics. That would be an excellent example of what I call the globalization of solidarity, and one of the best ideas that today's world could implement.

But the mission of the United Nations is not only to fight financial instability or ensure that development remains at the centre of our concerns: it is to work to counter all forms of instability. I am thinking here about drug trafficking, a scourge that affects producing, transit and consuming countries. To combat drug traffickers, who are frequently allied with terrorist networks, the United Nations must elaborate and implement a global strategy to fight against drugs.

Arms trafficking also poses a major threat. France is firmly committed to the conclusion of a universal arms trade treaty. What the United Nations must defend and promote is a worldview that is based on respect for fundamental rights and freedoms. The Arab Spring showed that those values are universal and apply to all continents and countries.

I want to welcome the events that took place in Tunisia, in Libya, in Egypt. It is true that transitions are not always easy. There are risks, and setbacks can occur. Some may attempt, through violence, to reverse the progress made and the achievements gained. France will call on the new political authorities emanating from democratic elections in those countries to wage an unrelenting combat against complacency, extremism, fanaticism, hatred, intolerance and violence, whatever the provocation may be, because there can never be any justification for violence.

France wants to set an example. It is not telling anyone what to do; that is simply its history and its message. We want to be an example in the promotion of fundamental freedoms. That is our combat, and we are honoured to wage it. That is why France will continue to fight to abolish the death penalty, to ensure women's right to equality and dignity, and to work towards the universal decriminalization of homosexuality, which cannot be viewed as a crime but must be recognized as an orientation.

We will continue to fight for the protection of civilians. Moreover, I recall that the Assembly affirmed the principle that all States have the responsibility to ensure the security of their civilians. If a State fails in that obligation, it is up to us, the United Nations, to use the means at its disposal to meet it in its place. Let us not neglect that promise, as it can serve us. I am thinking, in particular, of what is happening in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where civilians are the main victims of clashes and where foreign interference must cease as soon as possible.

The President returned to the Chair.

Those are the goals that France will support and defend at the United Nations. France has confidence in the United Nations. We know that no State, however powerful, can deal with emergencies, undertake the fight for development or overcome all crises. No State can do that, but, on the contrary, if we act together, we will live up to our responsibilities. France wants the United Nations to be the centre and the framework for global governance, but do the States that make up the Organization want that to be our purpose and goal?

I say in all seriousness that when there is paralysis, inertia and inaction, injustice and intolerance find their place. What I would like members to understand is that we must act in order to shoulder our responsibilities and to deal with urgent situations, such as Syria, nuclear proliferation and the Sahel. We must also work for another world that is based on development and innovative financing and for the fight against health crises. We must act, always and together. Let us live up to the mission entrusted to us and to the expectations of peoples. That is France's message.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the French Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. François Hollande, President of the French Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mrs. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Lithuania.

Mrs. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Mrs. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Grybauskaitė: In the past few years, the number of conflicts in the world has again been on the increase. That causes the deaths and injuries of, and a loss of shelter for, thousands of people. It leads to a delay in the development of our countries and the stagnation of regional and global economies.

Our common goal is to find ways to reduce tension, disagreement and conflict worldwide. The most important challenge in that respect is understanding the root causes of conflicts and concentrating efforts on prevention, not only on doing away with the consequences.

I want to draw the attention of Member States to one specific area that is very narrow but very important — energy. Since ancient times, the competition for natural resources has been the reason for very many conflicts. Energy resources are not equally distributed, so there is inequality in accessibility to energy. The existing dependency on energy remains a reason for abuse, not cooperation. A lack of clear and globally accepted rules and norms in the energy sector contributes to continuing tensions.

Recurring gas and oil supply crises every year remind us that, in a global environment, friction and disagreements over energy still lead to conflicts and tensions of all sorts. Being a small country, without its own resources, especially sources of energy, Lithuania is well aware of the negative consequences of energy dependency in an environment that has no universal agreement on or compliance with clear rules of the game. What can we do?

First, we need to increase global energy sustainability. I would like to congratulate Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his Sustainable Energy for All initiative, which is really relevant and timely. The improvement of energy efficiency, the diversification of the energy supply and global accessibility to energy are certainly the goals for which we should strive.

Secondly, we need to make existing inequalities in access to energy a source of cooperation, not tension. The use of energy dependency as an instrument for political or economic blackmail must be eliminated, not only to ensure equality but also to increase global competiveness and effectiveness. With the ongoing practices of price-fixing and abuse of monopolistic positions, which both distort competition, there can be no development, security or effectiveness.

Thirdly, our answer to energy-related conflict prevention should be international agreements that make clear that the use of energy to gain political goals is unacceptable. Responsibility for violations should also be clear and unavoidable. We must grant international institutions greater discretion to launch investigations and to impose sanctions on activities that hinder the free flow of energy resources, impede diversification or set unfair prices for customers.

I have one final point. There is no energy-related issue as dangerous as unsafe nuclear energy development. It is obvious that each country can decide on its own energy mix. However, each national decision to develop nuclear energy can have a devastating and transboundary impact, and should be extremely well grounded and researched. There can be no sustainability, development or peaceful cooperation without nuclear

safety. Mistakes in nuclear energy are too costly to be allowed.

In that respect, we welcome the actions taken by the International Atomic Energy Agency to improve the existing system of international nuclear safety regulations. Lithuania supports the position that nuclear safety standards should be strengthened and, if needed, legal international imperatives should be adopted. The 2012 Seoul Nuclear Security Summit clearly indicated that nuclear security and nuclear safety measures should be drawn up, implemented and managed in a coherent manner, as they both have a common aim to protect the people and their environment. Keeping the commitment that it assumed at the Summit, my country has contributed to international efforts to increase global awareness of existing energy insecurities and ways to prevent them by establishing the Nuclear Security Centre of Excellence in Lithuania.

In order to tackle the causes of conflicts, not just the consequences, we have to be honest players. We must honestly define the problems; speak openly about their reasons; be clear and precise in naming the rules of the game; and, last but not least, find in ourselves the political will to play according to the rules globally, especially once agreed upon.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Lithuania for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Ms. Flores (Honduras), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Address by Mr. Porfirio Lobo Sosa, President of the Republic of Honduras

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Honduras.

Mr. Porfirio Lobo Sosa, President of the Republic of Honduras, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Porfirio Lobo Sosa, President of the Republic of Honduras, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Lobo Sosa (*spoke in Spanish*): As always, it is an honour to participate in this Assembly of the peoples of the world, which pursues the ongoing struggle, among others, for the universal principles upheld since 1948. It is here and at this time that we can see that we are different, precisely in this Assembly, which reflects the wealth of our diversity. It is here where we work constantly to overcome our natural differences, respond to our common problems and strengthen the human family through agreed outcomes.

The international community must be consistent in that objective. We must be partners and allies at all times, ready to put forward initiatives, solutions and reforms that strengthen the need for close cooperation in the joint responsibility to protect not only the right to that diversity, but also the right to demonstrate it and to fully live it. All must participate in this forum, with no sister nation excluded or not invited. We are called upon to ensure the full recognition of each and every one, with complete security for all.

In Honduras, for some years we have acknowledged in all areas the need for a reform process that ensures respect for people's rights. Our first action, in accordance with our national law, was to invite regional and international organizations to come to Honduras and see our proposals and our work. We have set up a unit to investigate crimes against sexual diversity — lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender — under the Office of the Public Prosecutor. It focuses its attention on vulnerable groups and on furthering dialogue with the broader civil society.

On gender issues, the Honduran State has a policy gender progamme, which is a technical and political tool to help women achieve full equality and fairness. My Government supports a 40-per-cent share of women in elected posts in the 2013 electoral campaign and a 50-per cent participation in the following election in 2017. In April, the National Congress of the Republic adopted a law against trafficking in persons. That is a measure of compliance by the State of Honduras with important recommendations on trafficking in persons drawn up by international human rights bodies.

As we continue our fight for indigenous peoples, another essential part of our national plan and vision for the country is to put an end to the exclusion of such peoples and those of African descent and to ensure

their full and legitimate right to preserve their culture, language, traditions and world view. I am accompanied at this Assembly by a representation of all indigenous peoples in Honduras. Last year, we held the first World Summit for People of African Descent in Honduras. Next year, we will hold a world summit on indigenous peoples.

Today's world presents a range of new threats to our countries that are not traditional in form and that have created new dynamics. I am referring to the activities of transnational criminal organizations. According to research centres that track illicit economic activity, it is estimated that those groups now account for 10 per cent of the global gross domestic product. Those activities include money-laundering, bribes, drug trafficking, counterfeit, piracy and illicit trafficking in persons and weapons.

That astounding amount of financial resources dangerously corrupts our societies and Governments. In my view, it has become a threat to international security that must be assessed, understood and fought against by all members of the United Nations. My country and our citizens are victims of the insatiable appetite for drugs in developed countries and of the greed of the producers and traffickers, who become rich on huge profits stained with the blood of the innocent. Honduras is neither a consumer or producer country. Moreover, the traffickers come from the south and the north but those who die are Honduran. The mothers who suffer are Honduran, as are the orphans.

However, Honduras is not unaware of the problem. Despite our limited economic resources, we are facing such challenges with the necessary resolve to find comprehensive and immediate solutions to that situation. Our primary objective is to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our territory in the face of the aggression of which we are victims. To that end, by every means possible we must stop drugs from entering our country and ensure a complete prohibition of those that enter our national territory. We have therefore updated the regulatory framework and are reforming our institutions and security system.

As violence and crime threaten our young people, we have launched prevention programmes that can open up better horizons and opportunities. Legal and institutional reform and the implementation of programmes and projects to stop the violence have started to yield results. The most recent figures of the independent Violence Watch in Honduras show that the rate of homicides has fallen by 8.5 per cent this year. That figure, added to the 10-per cent drop in the annual increase just recorded, represents a total reduction in the homicide rate of 18.5 per cent per 100,000 inhabitants.

However, it is not only up to us victims to make an effort. As was made clear at the Summit of the Americas and at the recent General Assembly of the Organization of American States, combating organized crime, in particular illicit drug trafficking and related criminal activities, is a common, shared, but differentiated responsibility.

At this great Assembly, I wish to underscore the resolute cooperation of Colombia and Chile and the recent memorandum of understanding signed between Honduras and the United States of America. We also welcome the most recent measures taken by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on the issue of flight bans.

With regard to Colombia, allow me to congratulate its President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón and his Government on his initiative to put an end to 50 years of war among brothers. We commend the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia for their receptiveness. We also welcome the cooperation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Chile, Cuba and Norway. We wish them every success and hope that peace will return to that country.

I would also like to thank the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for its full support and recognition of the fact that we in Central America cannot face such scourges alone. We must seek every mechanism and try to be as creative as possible in dealing with that threat.

With greater respect for human rights and more citizen security, we will have more and better education. Honduras has therefore launched a significant reform process. The National Congress has adopted laws to bolster education and to ensure the participation of the family and the community. Our focus and key objective are to provide a sound foundation for our children and our youth. We support the right of teachers to disagree and, on occasion, to demonstrate, but the rights of children and young people to the education that they receive in their classrooms cannot be allowed to be interrupted.

Look at what is happening to us, according to UNICEF data. In Honduras, approximately 600 teaching

days have been lost in State schools and colleges in the past 10 years. That data is equivalent to three school years of 200 days. That means that a boy or a girl who has completed ninth grade in their studies has, in fact, only received a sixth-grade education. Clearly, that is a step backwards for society in general. According to figures from the Department of Education, in 2009, 50 school days were lost, in 2010, 30 days and, in 2011, 40 days. All those days correspond to calls for massive teacher walk-outs. According to a study of the National Independent University of Honduras, the country's principal university, of the top 100 colleges, that leading State college is ranked in seventeenth position. What an injustice.

It is our poorest children and young people, those who cannot afford private education, who go to State schools. We are condemning them to remain victims of the most serious exclusion. Those who most need them are denied opportunities. Why do we not declare in this Assembly of peoples that classrooms are sanctuaries of education and must never be closed?

We must continue our efforts to ensure greater access for the poor to the productive sectors of the national economy. Rapid, fair and sustainable growth is the true productive development of the country and, along with education and health care, the best way to reduce poverty and extreme poverty.

From the Office of the President and the First Lady, who is here with me at the Assembly, among others, we are working on a very important conditional cash transfer programme. It currently reaches 30 per cent of our poor families. That is an immediate and specific response to social exclusion.

Our geographic location makes Honduras one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change. Along with our socio-economic characteristics, that compels us, both nationally and regionally, to remain constantly vigilant in order to respond to natural threats and disasters. That is why we deem it key to participate in all specialized forums, in particular the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.

Today and now, in this Hall, Honduras reiterates its commitment to the international community to the comprehensive reform of the United Nations system. That will help to strengthen the principle of universality on the basis of just, fair and inclusive representation. The challenge is for us all and our commitment is universal. That is why we are gathered here now.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Honduras for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Porfirio Lobo Sosa, President of the Republic of Honduras, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia.

Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Pohamba: I extend warm congratulations to Mr. Jeremić and his country, Serbia, on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. My delegation is confident that, under his leadership, this session will address all burning issues on its agenda. I assure him of my delegation's cooperation and support. I also wish to thank his predecessor for presiding over the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. Similarly, I wish to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon on assuming his second mandate as Secretary-General at the beginning of this year.

The unresolved conflicts around the world demand commitment and resolve from us all in order to find durable solutions. I therefore commend the President for choosing the theme for the debate at this session, namely, "Adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means". Namibia firmly believes that, if we all dedicate ourselves to finding lasting solutions to conflicts by peaceful means, our collective efforts will be successful. There is no better way to achieve peace than by upholding the cardinal principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes, as provided for under Chapter VI of the United Nations Charter.

In that regard, we should renew the original commitment to peace and progress as essential values of the United Nations. Namibia believes that respect for the sovereign equality of States, territorial integrity and independence constitute the pillars of international law and, indeed, the bedrock of peaceful relations among nations. The violation of any of those principles poses a serious threat to international peace and security.

Regional and subregional organizations are important partners in solving conflicts in affected areas throughout the world. Their contribution to conflict resolution is provided for under the United Nations Charter. There is therefore a compelling need for the United Nations to take into account the views of regional organizations in the areas of mediation and peacemaking. Such institutions should be fully supported in finding lasting solutions to violent conflicts around the world.

In Africa, since its inception, the African Union Peace and Security Council has cooperated with the United Nations Security Council towards those shared goals of conflict resolution. Similarly, the subregion of the Southern African Development Community has established initiatives to resolve political conflicts in the region through mediation.

However, we are concerned about the deteriorating security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. We therefore urge the international community to support the regional initiative aimed at resolving that conflict and to provide humanitarian assistance to displaced persons. We call on all neighbouring countries to work together with the Congolese authorities to help resolve the conflict and to ensure that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is not violated.

In Madagascar, we urge the Malagasy political actors to expedite the full implementation of the road map leading to the holding of free, fair, inclusive and credible elections.

With regard to the Sudan and South Sudan, Namibia calls on the two countries to resolve all outstanding issues peacefully. In the Darfur region of the Sudan, we urge the Government and the other parties concerned to find a negotiated and peaceful solution to the conflict.

We denounce the unconstitutional changes of Government in Mali and Guinea-Bissau that took place, respectively, in March and April this year. Equally, Namibia resolutely rejects the secessionist attempts in northern Mali and the destruction of ancient shrines in Timbuktu. We wish to commend the role played by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in helping to resolve the conflicts in those two countries. At the same time, we urge the international community to provide support and assistance to ECOWAS.

Namibia welcomes the recent positive political developments in Somalia, including the election of His Excellency Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as President of that country. I congratulate him and wish him well in the noble task of bringing normalcy and stability to that sister country. The international community should continue to support the people of Somalia as they embark upon the path to rebuild their country.

For many decades, the people of Western Sahara have been denied their inalienable right to self-determination and independence. Namibia reiterates its call for the immediate and unconditional implementation of the United Nations Settlement Plan, leading to the holding of a free and fair referendum in Western Sahara.

Equally, we wish to reaffirm our unequivocal support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and national independence on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Each year during the general debate, the majority of States Members of the United Nations express their concern over the continued economic, commercial and financial blockade unilaterally imposed against the Republic of Cuba, with its adverse effect on the Cuban people. Thus, Namibia reiterates its call for the immediate and unconditional lifting of the embargo against Cuba.

Namibia attaches great importance to sustainable development and the search for the best ways to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change. In that regard, we will continue to actively cooperate with the international community to address climate change.

In that context, Namibia seeks the support of Member States in hosting the secretariat of the Green Climate Fund in our capital city, Windhoek If successful, that would provide an opportunity for a developing country to host a United Nations agency of great importance. Given the opportunity, Namibia stands ready to discharge its obligations arising from

hosting the Green Climate Fund secretariat. We count on Member States' support.

The reform of the United Nations and its principal organs should seek to strengthen the Organization in order to make it more efficient, effective and responsive to the needs of all its Members. In that context, strengthening the role and authority of the General Assembly is of paramount importance. Equally, the reform of the Security Council is at the core of the wider United Nations reform, given its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Namibia reiterates its support for the common African position on the reform of the Security Council.

Let us rededicate ourselves to the principle of the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means in order to save current and succeeding generations from the scourge of war and build a prosperous future for our children.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Namibia for the statement just made.

Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The meeting rose at 3.05 p.m.